in: Claire Winterghast, Witcher190, Witcher017, and 6 more

Jolanta Dinmarb

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Jolanta Dinmarb Pitch (codenamed *"The Liliger"*), also known as **The Mother of Cranes** and **Saint Jolanta** prior and after her death by Fabiolans, **Jolanta Dyn Marv**, **Jolanta of Brunwich**, **Jolanta "The Nightningale"** by the Crane Witchers from the third to the sixth generation, or simply **Jo**, was a legendary assassin, spy and witcheress from the School of the Cat, belonging to its second iteration, and co-founder of the School of the Crane after the Second Conjuction of Spheres along with the Griffin witcher, Putnam Pitch.

Jolanta Dinmarb

Jolanta Dinmarb (Circa, 1490)

Biographical Information	
Born	November 30th, 1257
Birthplace	Brunwich, Redania
Status	Dead (sanctified)
Died	1510
Deathplace	Cherdian, Fabiola, Western Continent
Service	1275 - 1510
Physical Description	
Race	Human (Witcher)
Gender	Female
Hair	Redheaded when
Eyes	Blue (prior to the mutations

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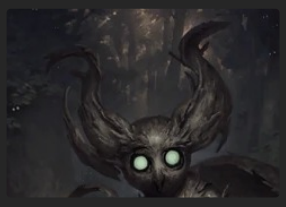

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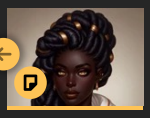
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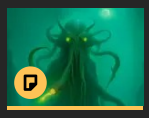
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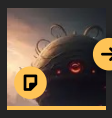
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	) Yellow Gold (after Nasira's intervention)
Skin	Pale with freckles
Political Information	
Profession	Witcher Assassin Spy Author
Rank	Elite Witcher (School of the Cat) Grandmaster (School of the Crane)
Titles	Saint Defender of the Innocent and Purifier of Corruption
Affiliation	School of the Cat Redanian Intelligence Service The Syndicate (indirectly) Gardunnia (indirectly) School of the Crane (co-foundress)
Alias(es)	Jolanta of Brunwich Jolanta Dyn Marv The Red Cat of Novigrad The Liliger (codename) The Liliger of Novigrad The Bloody Mary (by other intelligence services in the Northern Kingdoms) Janela Yioma Maria Derman Gaurs The Last Cat Mother of Cranes Jolanta "The Nightningale"
Nationality	Redanian
Relationships	
Father	Pardus of Korath (adoptive father) Unknown biological father
Mother	Unknown biological mother
Sibling(s)	Tubiel of Brenna (middle sister figure) Mozeh of Verden (big sister figure) D´yaebl (sister figure) Dragonfly (sister figure) Caldigi (big brother figure)
Lover(s)	Joël (teenage love and lover, briefly) [1272 / 1282] Vargos of Hengfors (boyfriend) [1275 - 1276] Putnam Pitch (lover / boyfriend / husband) [1280 - 1281 / 1286 / 1360 / 1381 - 1510] Alexandre Nokta Laurent de Valois (boyfriend) [1283 - 1285] Biruta Icarti (lover) [1285] Unknown farmer (lover) [1285] Sainne (lover) [1285] Unknown jeweler (lover) [1286] Teirgh (lover / boyfriend) [1330 / 1332 / 1336 / 1340 /

	1347 / 1353 - 1360]
Other	Guxart (grandfather figure) Stefan "The Crane" (adoptive son) Orser "The Robin" (adoptive son) Ucalt "The Vulture" (adoptive son) Ezeld "The Parrot" (adoptive son) Acol "The I´iwi" (adoptive son) Deeran "The Hoa" (adoptive son) Enu "The Flamingo" (adoptive son) Uzoma "The Alicanto" (adoptive son) Idowu "The Benu" (adoptive son) Math "The Boobrie" (adoptive son) Halsey "The Basan" (adoptive daughter)

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Biography

Early life (1257 - 1258)

Jolanta was born in the coldest reaches of autumn in

Brunwich

Brunwich, Redania. She was the only child of a marriage whose names were never recorded, a union that yearned for a son and had her instead. The first five years of Jolanta's life were miserable and bleak, for her mother was absent and her father was abusive. The profound fear of water and boats that plagued the witcheress throughout her life actually stemmed from these early stages of it. When she was three, her father attempted to drown her in a barrel of water and then kicked the barrel downhill, hoping to be rid of her. Fortunately, a neighbor witnessed this and rescued the child, but had to return her to her mother upon her request. She endured two more years with them until Pardus of Korath entered her life in 1262. While Jolanta can scarcely recall her biological parents, the phobia her father instilled in her would never truly be cured.

Training and raising in Dyn Marv (1262 - 1269)

Pardus of Korath

Pardus's rescue from a potentially short and miserable life was due to something simple. By the time the year 1262 arrived, Pardus was traveling with the caravan, which was crossing through Redania. He had been sent by the other Cat witchers in search of contracts because one of the wheels had broken down, and they needed the money to fix it. This is how Pardus arrived in Brunwich, where he found that they needed the services of a witcher, as there were problems with ghouls in the vicinity.

Pardus then arranged a payment with the representatives of the villagers, who had been Jolanta's parents at the time, and took care of the problem. However, tensions flared when Pardus returned, since they wanted to pay him a lot less. And in a fit of anger, typical of the enhanced emotions of the School of the Cat, Pardus ended their lives.

Jolanta´s House in Brunwich

It would be during the looting of Jolanta's parents' house, in search of valuable items to sell in order to acquire the necessary funds for the caravan wheel repair, and perhaps, just in case, to buy extra wheels, that Pardus would come across Jolanta, who had been confined to the basement. Upon seeing the girl and witnessing not only the physical but also the emotional abuse she had endured, he made the decision to take her with him to Dyn Marv.

The red-haired girl evoked memories of his own past, of how he had been when his parents decided to trade him to the Cat witchers as the caravan passed through the Korath Desert in exchange for water. He saw in her not only a potential apprentice and Cat witcher, but also an adopted daughter. He had always yearned for more than just a mentor, as he himself had experienced under the harsh tutelage of Guxart before the exiled Griffin witcher reconverted in Cat tooked the Grandmaster mantle. He longed for a father figure who cared, and he believed that with Jolanta he could fulfill that wish in a way.

Although trained under Pardus' tutelage for most of her time in Dyn Marv, due to

the imperfections that the witcher trials had left in Pardus' body, by the decision of the grandmaster of the School of the Cat, Guxart, Jolanta went through several tutors who complemented her education during the seven years she lived in the caravan. Additionally, Pardus was efficient in killing humans (in fact, he specialized in it) and in instilling her a series of values when taking contracts to deal with them, in order to prevent something like the Iello massacre caused by Brehen. However, in other aspects, he was less efficient than any of his peers, and Guxart believed that the girl at that time should receive a more balanced training. One of them was Guxart himself, who in the end, came to love her as if she were his own granddaughter and ended up teaching her how to deal with opponents larger than her in various situations, something he still remembered from his time at the School of the Griffin before being exiled, among other minor matters of her training.

Dragonfly (Circa, 1260s)

Other teachers included Mozeh of Verden, with whom she developed a little sister - big sister bond. Mozeh took on the responsibility of teaching her about potions once Jolanta underwent mutations. There was also Dragonfly, with whom she also formed a sisterly bond. Dragonfly taught her martial arts, specifically Basilian Wrestling. Then there was D'yaebl (as Guxart hadn't given up on her and wanted to integrate her as best as possible despite what happened with her and Brehen). With D'yaebl, Jolanta formed another sisterly bond, although it was weaker due to D'yaebl's mental instability. D'yaebl taught her infiltration techniques and the use of small weapons (area which D´yaebl specialized in). Lastly, there was Caldigi, with whom she developed a little sister - big brother bond. Caldigi took it upon himself to teach her general knowledge, and things like reading and writing.

As for Jolanta's relationship with Tubiel and their bond akin as younger sister and middle sister, it is due to what happened with Tubiel's first mentor. He tragically passed away after a disagreement with another Cat that resulted in a fight when Tubiel was only nine years old and Jolanta was seven. As a result, Tubiel was reassigned to Pardus of Korath, who, in addition to continuing to train Jolanta, took charge of (although not completing) Tubiel's training during the years prior to the fall of the caravan, making it so that through their training together, both witcheresses would develop that kind of bond (In fact, it would be thanks to Pardus' techniques for killing humans, that at the age of fourteen, Tubiel would avoid a sexual abuse by killing the three Cat witchers who intended to commit the horrific act)

Mutations and major Trials (1267)

For more information about the mutation process in women, check the Female Witchers article.

Young Jolanta

At the beginning, just as it had been done during the early days of the School of the Cat in Stygga (and as it would happen to what Jolanta considered her middle sister, Tubiel of Brenna), Pardus trained Jolanta in the ways of the witchers, without mutating her out of fear of losing her, as he had developed a deep bond with the girl, deeper than he had ever imagined when he found her, and seeing her die was something that terrified him. However, Jolanta, by

showing considerable talent and endurance during the training that followed The Choice, caught the attention of Guxart (or Grandfather Guxart as Jolanta knew him), who saw her as a good candidate to undergo the experimental formula created for women by the mages of the first iteration of the School of the Cat during their experimentation phase in the aforementioned fortress, which had been recovered by Gezras and his group during the fall.

The grandmaster of the School of the Cat saw her as an optimal candidate to undergo the transformation and potentially yield even better results than Mozeh of Verden or D'yaebl (since the latter, as already mentioned, due to the mutations and the abusive training received from Brehen, had become quite psychologically unstable). Guxart had a premonition that Jolanta possessed the conditions to be among the most successful of all those who had mutated after the founding of the caravan (which were very few, to say the least, with the exception of those mentioned). And he was not mistaken, for that's how it turned out. At the age of ten, despite Pardus' discussions with Guxart, Jolanta underwent her version of the Trial of The Grasses, along with another group of girls of various ages whom Guxart saw potential in, although not as much as in her. Jolanta ended up being the sole survivor of the transformation process, much like her father, barely surviving this and the subsequent ones, remaining somewhat imperfect for a while.

It would only be during their passage through Magne in 1274, when Pardus and she encountered Nasira, that, in exchange for the opportunity to study her (as she was the first live case Nasira had found that was completely mutated, albeit imperfect, unlike what she had achieved with Imad Assem prior to the dissolution of the School of the Manticore), Nasira managed to heal Jolanta's imperfections. This served the Zerrikanian sorceress in theorizing that if women were mutated at a later age, the chances of success would be higher (something that eventually would prove to be true).

The Fall of Dyn Marv (1269)

Jolanta experienced the downfall of the caravan that had been her home at the tender age of 12, while it was passing through Cintra, something that would leave a lasting mark on her forever. So much so that in the distant future, she would eventually adopt its name, Dyn Marv, as her surname to honor it (although eventually the surname would become corrupted to Dinmarb due to bureaucratic reasons). It wasn't only the takeover of the caravan by Nilfgaardian soldiers that marked her, but also the events leading up to it, especially the conspiracy organized by Lexandre along with other members of the School of the Cat, such as D'yaebl, Faustino, and Loathen, to kill Guxart and those close to him (Lexandre out of hatred and to steal the grandmaster diagrams, D'yaebl for unknown reasons, but probably out of resentment for not acting earlier against Brehen, and Faustino and Loathen to take control of the school, as one believed that Guxart was too influenced by his past in the School of the Griffin and that his old morality, since he took power as grandmaster, was affecting the new generations too much, making them "weak", and the other because he harbored resentment for the investigation Guxart did with Vesemir of the Wolves in the Witcher Tournament against "his own", seeing him as a traitor unworthy of his position).

Lexandre (Circa, 1269)

Their plans were partially successful, as only Guxart died. Fortunately, despite her young age, she, like other members of the school, survived. In her case, by escaping with Pardus and Caldigi from the chaos that followed both the conspiracy and Guxart's death, as well as the attack and takeover by the Nilfgaardian soldiers of the caravan, events which happened one after the other,

because the conspirators had formed an alliance with the soldiers by promising them their help to put an end to bandit problems in the new territory of the empire, not anticipating that they would eventually betray them and take over their home as revenge, since some members of the brigade the conspirators had contacted had been killed by members of the School of the Cat, who had, like Coën of the School of the Griffin, participated in the battle of Brenna against Nilfgaard (although in the Cats' case as mercenaries for the Nordling forces).

Travelling and training with Pardus (1269 - 1275)

> *"Monsters come in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes they wear crowns."*
> —Pardus to Jolanta during her training

After the caravan's fall, Jolanta and Pardus separated from Caldigi (who eventually joined the School of the Fox) and continued traveling together. During this time, not only did their bond as adoptive father and daughter strengthen even further, but Pardus also used the time to, as much as possible, complete her training. This training, due to the absence of the caravan and the assistance of other Cats witchers, was much more practical than theoretical, but training nonetheless. Over the course of those six years, they traveled throughout the Northern Realms, the Nilfgaardian Empire, and even a small part of the vast Barsa region, from the cold Narok, through Lower Alba, all the way to Sadat, facing numerous challenges together along the way. These challenges not only served to eventually make Jolanta more than competent in her profession, but also a curious and pragmatic woman capable of surviving even in the least favorable circumstances. Her journey with Pardus and the fact that her training was more practical than theoretical taught her that there isn't a fixed way of doing things, but rather a wide range of possibilities, and one must adapt to them in order to thrive in the long run.

It would be in the year 1275 when her journey with Pardus would come to an end. At the age of 18, Jolanta embarked on The Path as a full-fledged Cat witcheress, after Pardus, with the concern that only a father can have for his daughter's well-being, made sure she was more than capable. He even subjected her to the Trial of the Sword, albeit in his own way, just to reassure himself that she would know how to fend for herself without him.

Teen Jolanta (Circa, 1272)

It's worth noting that this didn't mean Jolanta and Pardus lost contact. After she began her solo journey, they exchanged letters frequently and occasionally met in person. However, due to Pardus's frequent travels (even though he stayed in the cities for a time) their contact was more sporadic than both of them would have liked.

As a curiosity, a significant portion of the freckles that Jolanta had during her adolescence and early adulthood came from the time she spent in the south. Another curiosity is that she indirectly heard about what would be the love of her life, Putnam Pitch, in 1273. This happened when, during Jolanta and Pardus's passage through Sadat, they overheard high-ranking Nilfgaardian soldiers (who were backing Western Barsa). They were discussing how the Ofiri (who were backing up Eastern Barsa) were searching for their kidnapped princes and sending diplomatic contingents everywhere. Since after the death of Sirvat in 1272, Nibras didn't have any male heir and he didn't want his only daughter to take the crown. They suggested that it should be brought up with their marshal so that it would reach Emhyr's ears, allowing them to deceive them and thus gain influence over the entire region.

Home in Novigrad, union and first year in the Redanian Intelligence Service and relationship with Vargos (1275 - 1276)

> *"Authority is earned, not inherited. Respect is a two-way street."*
> —Jolanta to Djikstra

The first romantic relationship in what would become Jolanta's disastrous personal life was with Joël, another member of the School of the Cat, who had been a student during the fall of the caravan like her. This took place in the year 1272, three years before Jolanta would finish her unorthodox training with Pardus of Korath and one year before Joël joined the reform created by Lambert to honor Aiden. The relationship was brief but intense, as all teenage loves tend to be, since both of them were 15 years old at the time. In fact, it began after Joël reunited with Gaetan due to the death of the one who was his master, Klef, and shortly after a certain white-haired witcher spared Gaetan's life. Joël and Gaetan then decided to search for Schrödinger to finally confirm whether he was truly alive or dead, search that proved fruitless in the end, as some leads said he was still alive, others said he was dead. Pardus and Jolanta later joined this search when they encountered them in The Path, and it was in this context that their relationship developed. Like all teenage loves, it was a disaster, but eventually, it would pave the way for the appearances of Vargos and Putnam, both from the School of the Griffin in Jolanta's life.

Pardus didn't approve of the relationship between Jolanta and Joël while it lasted, not because he didn't like Joël, but because he believed it distracted both teenagers from their training. Gaetan (who, after Klef's death, had become Joël's informal mentor) shared the same opinion as well.

Joël (Circa, 1272)

Jolanta's joining of the Redanian Intelligence Service happened in a rather simple, and one could even say, natural way.
After parting ways with Pardus once her adoptive father considered her a full-fledged Cat witcheress in 1275, Jolanta did what her father had taught her and set out in search of contracts for both humans and monsters, setting her sights on the most important city in the Northern Realms, namely Novigrad. There, she began to work, dispatching both humans and the monsters that could be found in the sewers, one of the always reliable source of work for a witcher. Before long, she began to make a name for herself and build a reputation, being dubbed as *"The Red Cat of Novigrad"* or the *"Liliger of Novigrad"* after many learned of her adoptive father's exotic origins. Her reputation was mixed; some, especially the non-humans and the poor, adored her, as she made the areas where she lived much safer by dealing with bandits and other criminals, in addition to the monsters. Others, on the other hand, hated her for the same reason, and two notable examples were the so-called "Guild of Beggars" and the Church of the Eternal Fire. The latter, because Jolanta took it upon herself to assassinate abusive husbands in the city, much like Pardus had done with her family in Brunwich so many years ago. In fact, the Church of the Eternal Fire even allied with the Guild of Beggars, and they came close to burning her as a "witch". However, she escaped this fate when her mixed reputation caught the attention of Dijkstra, who wanted to recruit her to serve his interests.

Jolanta's House in Novigrad

Jolanta accepted, not so much because she had no other choice after Dijkstra saved her life, but also because the conditions the man offered her were quite favorable despite everything. And so, she began working for the Redanian Intelligence Service, primarily undertaking tasks of infiltration and assassination, with the occasional sabotage against Radovid due to the tensions between Dijkstra and the Redanian monarch. She earned a substantial sum of money in the process, as she was so effective that she left no trace, which allowed her to, sooner rather than later, acquire a house in Novigrad, that from then on, it would serve not only as her winter refuge but also as her home.

Dijkstra during a mission

On the other hand, the relationship with what would become one of the key loves in Jolanta's life, similarly to how Tubiel was for Putnam, would occur after Jolanta as mentioned before, had already graduated as a witcheress from the School of the Cat and had joined as a freelance agent for the Redanian Intelligence Service (and indirectly, for the Syndicate in Novigrad, and its evolution throughout the Northern Realms and the Nilfgaardian Empire, the Gardunnia). In a somewhat fortuitous and vaguely premonitory manner, if one chooses to see it that way, this relationship foreshadowed her future connection with Putnam.

This situation unfolded when Jolanta was assigned to investigate problems caused by a criminal boss who had recently risen to power, seizing control of a significant portion of the city's brothels. His refusal to join the Syndicate and his independent operations were causing considerable headaches and reducing profits for the organization. Upon her investigation, she made the discovery that the criminal boss turned out to be a bluebeard named Istruld Arrelilm Oornen Fispoleff coming from Vengerberg who had taken the place (and later become a criminal boss) of the infamous Bluebeard of Novigrad after his death during the Witch Hunts. His workers, revealed to be hybrids of dwarves and ogres procured from Rissberg (hence the reason why the Syndicate or even the Church of the Eternal Fire had not acted against him before and they had hired her), were already dead after a massacre when she arrived to deal with them. So the work was done before it even began.

The sole survivor of this scene, surprisingly, appeared to be a witcher from the School of the Griffin who, at first glance, seemed lifeless but was, in fact, unconscious. He had singlehandedly dispatched all of them after a grueling battle. According to Jolanta's deductions during her investigation of the scene, he had uncovered the criminal boss's activities. Not only did Istruld exploit the prostitutes by demanding exorbitant working hours, but he was also involved in human trafficking, selling the girls to mages and other influential individuals when they did not meet his demands, permitting them to do as they pleased with the girls as long as it did not impact his profits (which eventually would allow him to get a new wife to feed on and buy people off to avoid scandals). This surely had resulted in the battle that the Griffin had, as it aligned with their moral code, given that they were monsters, sentient yet monsters.

So, Jolanta's only option, even if it was out of empathy, was to claim the reward by delivering bluebeard's head to those who were now her bosses (even though she wasn't the one that killed the monster) and collect the substantial sum of money they offered. Afterward, she returned to where Vargos was, took him out of that place, and brought him to Eberhatt of Rivia's clinic to save the Griffin's life. She had become a regular there, as it was initially more affordable, and later, because Eberhatt gave her a discount since Jolanta, after she discovered his "sickness," supplied him from time to time with the materials needed for the medicine that prevented his physical transformation (although it was becoming less effective due to tolerance) into a werewolf during the nights of the full moon

(since Eberhatt suffered from lycanthropy). Luckily, in the end, Vargos was unharmed, except for some minor injuries and temporary retrograde amnesia that Jolanta and Eberhatt discovered as soon as he woke up. After that, and providing some context to Vargos about what had happened, Jolanta offered half of the reward money to the Griffin and decided to leave, changing her mind at the last minute, because she felt she had to help him more, for the indirect favor he had done her by killing all the criminals. This set the stage for the relationship they would have sooner rather than later.

Jolanta took him to her house, letting him stay in the guest room, and helped him as much as possible in recovering his memory. She took him to places that might seem familiar as the fog in his mind gradually allowed him to see things and provide vague descriptions of what he remembered. It took some time, but eventually, it worked, and in the process, they grew closer. Because Vargos (even with his amnesia), like many Griffins, was a charming, kind, approachable, and noble man, who even exuded a certain aura of respect and admiration for his enemies. That, along with the fact that he stayed in her house, "familiarity bred fondness," and as Vargos regained most of his memory, their relationship blossomed.

Vargos

In fact, it would be during the early stages of her relationship with Vargos that Jolanta would hear about Putnam directly for the first time. There was a strong affection between Vargos and the one who would be, for a long time, the youngest member of the School of the Griffin. Vargos shared all sorts of anecdotes from time to time as he returned to his old self. So, by the time Jolanta and Putnam met in person, and not just through third-party mentions, she already knew him more than Putnam could have ever imagined.

The bond between Jolanta and Vargos was remarkably healthy. They both experienced personal growth and gleaned valuable lessons from each other, not only in their respective professions. As a Griffin Witcher Ranger, Vargos guided Jolanta in refining her tracking skills, which were proficient but not yet exceptional. Conversely, Jolanta, a Cat Witcheress Assassin, shared her expertise in enhancing Vargos's infiltration techniques.

During the period of amnesia recovery, Vargos took the opportunity to scrutinize his own imperfections with a newfound clarity, aided by Jolanta's support. In turn, Jolanta benefited from Vargos's perspective and wisdom, addressing her own areas of improvement.

Moreover, their relationship was marked by passion, romance, and intensity. Had they not resided in Novigrad, it might have even taken on a bucolic quality. For Jolanta, this was her first profoundly serious relationship, a welcome departure from the disappointment she had experienced with her teenage love, Joël, and his more cynical, less romantic disposition.

However, Vargos and Jolanta's relationship did not take place during the time they were together only in Novigrad, because as witchers they both were, they eventually got to travel. Although at first both were hesitant, due to Vargos' amnesia, Jolanta took the initiative, thinking that traveling would help him recover his memory faster (which it did), although they did not go very far, relatively speaking, such as to Magne, they did reach Cintra, in order to return in time for the winter to Novigrad without taking a ship due to the aforementioned terror that Jolanta felt for the sea. In fact, it would be in Cintra, while Vargos was

shopping for potion materials (as he wanted to check if that helped him to remember more things of his previous life) that the nicknamed Red Cat of Novigrad, would meet with what she considered as her sisters, Tubiel of Brenna and Mozeh of Verden, offering her help to Tubiel, when Tubiel asked her and Mozeh after telling them about an investigation she was doing. Unbeknownst to Jolanta and Mozeh, this would indirectly lead to the death of the Lioness of Brenna four years later.

The culmination of their relationship occurred on what would have been their first anniversary in 1276. Jolanta awoke one morning to find herself alone, with Vargos absent, replaced only by a bouquet of flowers he had left as an apology for his abandonment of her. Following this, they never crossed paths again, and Vargos would tragically meet his end four years later in the devastating event known as the Magne Massacre. Vargos' abandonment deeply affected Jolanta as it took her by surprise and confirmed many of her fears and insecurities about relationships. This event served as the initial layer of emotional armor that she would often wear to shield herself from vulnerability. By the time Putnam entered her life, Jolanta had already built up these emotional defenses, and he experienced this firsthand. However, as they traveled together, Jolanta gradually let her guard down, which allowed the birth of what would become their complex relationship.

It should be said that the reason for Vargos' sudden abandonment of Jolanta in 1276 was likely not due to Vargos regaining his memory completely, but rather due to the previous relationships that had occurred between members of the School of the Griffin and the School of the Cat, with a special emphasis on the relationship between Kristov of White Orchard and D'yaebl (not so much that of Matlena and Zamir). Since Kristov had died while traveling with her at the hands of the bounty hunter Leo Bonhart, and Keldar, who held Kristov in high regard, wrongly blamed D'yaebl for his death, believing that she had allied herself with the bounty hunter and killed Kristov. This led Keldar to further enforce his already strict policy of engaging with members of the School of the Cat in any way (with the only exception being Tubiel, both because she was not mutated and because she had been raised for a certain period of time in the School of the Griffin).

Full life as assasin and spy (1276 - 1280)

> *"The only thing more predictable than people is their hypocrisy."*
> —Jolanta after Vargos' abandonment

The next four years of Jolanta's life after the abandonment of Vargos and her joining the Redanian Intelligence Service, one could say, were lonely years, but emotionally calm. During this time, Jolanta dedicated herself to fulfilling different assignments and traveling (sometimes on her own to seek contracts, and other times on orders from the already mentioned intelligence service). In fact, it would be, in spite of the tensions between Sigismund and Radovid, and thanks to the work of infiltration, espionage, and assassination assigned to Jolanta, that what would later be known in the history of the Northern Kingdoms as the Iron Judgment era would have relative success. Being the military defeats of Radovid during the different uprisings and oppositions that took place in places like Aedirn and Mahakam were what caused the return to the status quo and the end of this era of great power and influence for the kingdom of Redania.

For future contingencies (April - June of 1276)

At some point during her early years as a spy and assassin for the Redanian Intelligence Service, between April and June of 1276, while returning from a mission, Jolanta defended a group of merchants from the distant Melukka who were being assaulted by one of the many criminal gangs present in Novigrad. In gratitude, the merchants paid her in spices, specifically those not grown in Zerrikania, which allowed these merchants to maintain healthy competition with the Zerrikanian Spice Company. Jolanta accepted this payment and kept these spices as a financial safety net for emergencies. This same spices eventually allowed her to gather the money to travel to the Western Continent in the distant

future.

"The Golden Griffin" (late 1280 - early 1281)

> *"And I thought the night couldn't get any more interesting"*
> —Putnam Pitch to Olivia Cheboi, the owner of the Purple Rose

It must be said that as if destiny had been preparing that encounter, giving signals to both in its own way, Jolanta and Putnam already knew each other. As previously alluded to, their respective partners (that is, the considered sister for Jolanta, Tubiel of Brenna with Putnam, and the considered brother for Putnam, Vargos of Hengfors with Jolanta), had shared stories about them during their time together. This aroused curiosity in both of them to meet the people they had heard about (more so in Jolanta's case about Putnam, than Putnam about Jolanta, but still arousing it in the latter).

Their encounter would happen, even with all that said, in a somewhat fortuitous manner, we could say. One day, like any other, when Jolanta, a regular customer at the Rosemary and Thyme, after finishing a job for the Redanian Intelligence Service, was headed there for dinner, but found the tavern closed for renovations. This frustrated her a bit, as she hadn't received the money yet and didn't have much to pay for her meal (in fact, if she went to the Rosemary and Thyme, it was because as a regular customer and having become friends with Zoltan, he would sometimes give her free dinners, knowing she'd pay back the meals sooner rather than later). This made her have to look for another place, a cheaper one, heading to the Purple Rose, where, unbeknownst to her, she would finally get to meet the love of her life, Putnam Pitch.

The Purple Rose (September of 1280)

Check the "Tomorrow is Another Day" short story.

The Purple Rose Tavern was a relatively new establishment situated in a recently developed district known as the Red District of Novigrad. This district began to take shape in 1273, following the departure of the mages from the city due to the period later known as the Witch Hunts. Tax incentives were extended to those who acquired the properties of the mages and repurposed them into 'places of good,' which led many of the city's brothels to relocate to this area, giving rise to the so-called Red District of Novigrad as a well established district by 1280. This moniker stemmed from a trend of painting the buildings red during that era, driven by the belief that it would attract prosperity to the area. Only a handful of well-established brothels, such as the Passiflora, opted to retain their original locations.

The Purple Rose had initially functioned as a brothel in this district long before it became the Red District. It had been inherited by Olivia Cheboi, who was of mixed Nordling and Zangvebarian descent through her mother. Her mother had established the brothel as a means to make use of her father's wealth, a Zangvebarian merchant who had settled in Novigrad but tragically succumbed to tuberculosis when Olivia was still a child. For a time, Olivia assumed the role of madame, but she felt that this life wasn't meant for her. Consequently, she transformed the brothel into a tavern offering reasonably priced services, a move that eventually made it a highly popular establishment despite its location.

As a curiosity, this transformation was also due to her relationship with a certain famous bard, who ended up cheating on her with one of the prostitutes. This was the last straw and the definitive push needed to transform the old brothel into a tavern.

The Purple Rose, when Jolanta arrived that night in September, had been assaulted by bandits, more specifically, bandits working for the Gardunnia, who were looking for a lead on D'yaebl to make her pay (on orders from the new

criminal bosses who had risen to power) for the murders of the six deceased high-ranking members of the organization who had assigned her a certain job (because the organization, despite the setback caused by Putnam and D'yaebl, did not dissolve but went through a small crisis and a change of leadership). They didn't find her, but they did find Putnam (whom D'yaebl was supposed to have killed but didn't due to the events that had taken place on the night of D'yaebl's failed assassination of the Golden Griffin).

Organization, for which Jolanta had also worked, although in an unofficial capacity, more like assignments from Dijkstra that didn't appear in the records, than anything else. "Favors," you could say. This would end up saving Putnam's life when Jolanta managed to convince the new leaders of the organization to leave him alone because they were just wasting resources. This was the first time of many that she would save Putnam's life in one way or another.

So, when Putnam arrived at The Purple Rose and found the bandits interrogating and threatening innocent people, putting the owner in danger, he had to deal with the problem, which turned out to be a relatively simple task. And that's how Jolanta met him in person, smashing the last of the mentioned bandits' skull against a table until the bandit stopped breathing as she entered, starving, through the door.

And indeed, it would be after that, that they would lock eyes, recognize each other from what they had heard about each other back in the day, and Jolanta, feeling generous despite the little money she had, would invite him to dinner, and to talk, because the truth was, he had saved her from having to deal with the bandits since she was not in the mood for that, and that deserved some kind of reward. Both of them were unaware in that moment of how crucial that gesture would be on the part of the so-called Red Cat, both for their future together and in that of their guild.

Travelling together / first stage of the relationship (September - December of 1280)

The dinner that Jolanta and Putnam had on the day they met, despite their contrasting personalities - highlighting Jolanta's pragmatism contrasting with Putnam's idealism - went very well, in fact, exceptionally so. This was once they got past the barrier of Vargos and Caldigi's deaths, which Putnam conveyed while trying to be as stoic as possible, determined not to fall apart. It had only been a few months since the death of Jolanta's ex-boyfriend, Caldigi, whom she considered her older brother, and Vargos, whom Putnam considered as one of his brothers. It wasn't love at first sight that emerged between them, but it was close.

For Putnam, at least initially, two factors came into play (others, such as the weight of his relationship with the deceased Tubiel of Brenna, and how Jolanta, vaguely reminded him of her, came later in the dinner). First, a sense of responsibility, a feeling of "Vargos's final wish," a conviction that "I can fix her, I must do it for my brother." This was derived from the conversations they had had in Kaer Seren about her and the sometimes justified prejudices about the School of the Cat Witchers. Second, there was physical attraction. Up until Jolanta came into his life in 1280, he had a streak of only seeking revenge for Tubiel's death, getting high with Black Seagull, and sleeping with the random beautiful woman he managed to captivate at any time, only to abandon her the next morning out of guilt and without explanation. This was a momentary way to alleviate the emotional pain he felt from the loss, not only of the one who was considered a sister to Jolanta, but also many other losses, whether they occurred at the wedding or during Tubiel's led rescue, using the rawest hedonism.

For Jolanta, there were even more elements at play. There was a feeling of nostalgia for Vargos because, despite abandoning her without any explanation, during the time they were together, he treated her very well. This feeling was combined with physical attraction towards Putnam. Putnam's charisma was also

a factor (despite being extremely broken inside, his charisma still functioned at its best). Another plus was that there was a certain air of mystery and curiosity, derived not only from his reserved nature but also from what she had heard about him. Lastly, she saw a moment of vulnerability in him that attracted her, beneath all those layers of toughness that the future father of the cranes had been accustomed to wearing and would wear for a long time.

So, by the time dinner ended, both had been considering traveling together for much of it, due to the aforementioned reasons. This manifested itself when both where in Jolanta's house, about to go their separate ways forever, and Putnam told her the proposal which Jolanta accepted.

The Corpus Custodia of Iello (October of 1280)

> *"Oh, of course, Jolanta! Let's all just prioritize our own survival and watch the world crumble even further. Because, clearly, that's the genius strategy we've all been waiting for. Fighting fire with fire? Brilliant! Who needs a solution when we can just escalate the chaos, right? As if violence somehow breeds unicorns and rainbows!"*
> —Putnam to Jolanta during their journey to Iello

The relationship between Jolanta and Putnam developed slowly, despite their mutual physical attraction. This was due to various factors, such as the emotional defenses that Jolanta had put up after Vargos' abandonment, in addition to Putnam's sense of responsibility to "fulfill Vargos' last wish" and to "guide Jolanta down the right path," which prevented Putnam from crossing certain lines because he felt it would tarnish the memory of someone he once considered his brother.

Adding to this was the clash of their personalities, which became evident within a week of traveling together. While Putnam (despite everything he had experienced) tried to act with calm and restraint, always resorting to dialogue as the first option and violence as a last resort, Jolanta did the opposite, preferring to appear as a threat and a "monster" in the eyes of common people to get what she wanted, rather than someone close who would show that mutants like them shouldn't be feared. This inevitably led to many arguments, especially due to two major flaws in Putnam (which intensified around that time as a way to purge the remorse that arose from his revenge and other issues): his moralism, judging Jolanta too much for her behavior and reprimanding her instead of understanding her and trying to change her mind by showing her how his approach could yield better results, and his pride.

Jolanta despised this with all her being, just as Putnam detested her excessive pragmatism, considering the Red Cat to be teetering on the edge between animality and humanity due to her lack of what he considered a clear moral compass. But even so, they did not part ways. Putnam because of the aforementioned reasons, and Jolanta because, beyond what was mentioned, she saw in him not only what Vargos had brought to her and endured, but more things that were revealed as the days passed, as if the vulnerability she had seen at dinner was a teaser.

She saw a broken and weary man beneath that reserved appearance, a man whom the world, instead of thanking for his help, had crushed with all its might. Yet he stood there, ready to continue. A man whose anger (because she had witnessed it) when it arose, was not out of hatred, far from it, but out of deep pain and concern that no one should experience what he did. She saw how even, despite whatever he had experienced (which she didn't know the specifics of at that time, Putnam hadn't told her but she had a sense of it), he still showed kindness to people, something that, had it been her, she would have done the opposite. This made Jolanta feel a profound compassion and a desire to help him, which eventually, along with what was mentioned before, transformed into genuine love. Although it wouldn't be until the events that occurred in Iello that

what was between them began to take a more defined shape.

The problem that Jolanta and Putnam encountered in the city of Iello was related to mages, for which the mayor had issued a witcher contract. Initially, this made Putnam hesitate due to the traumas he had suffered at the hands of a mage, an ordeal that had ended five months prior. He seriously considered rejecting the offer and continuing to travel, if not for Jolanta. Without second thoughts, she accepted the contract, partly due to the substantial amount of money involved, and partly out of vengeance after learning the name of the mage. This, in turn, dragged Putnam into the situation.

The problem was relatively simple yet complicated at the same time. It all began when the mayor of Iello went to visit the tower of the mage Ireneus var Steingard asking for help with his health related issues (the same mage who had tortured a member of the School of the Cat, Kiyan, information shared with a young Jolanta and Pardus, by a certain famous white-haired witcher, at some point in 1273). The revelation of the mage's name by the mayor fueled Jolanta's desire to avenge her fallen comrade, believing that she might find clues about his whereabouts in the tower.

However, the mayor discovered the tower abandoned and in ruins. Inadvertently, he triggered the tower's initial security systems, causing Ireneus's small army of Corpus Custodia to activate and track him down. This, of course, forced the mayor to flee. As a result, this small army attempted to assault the town every night to "neutralize the threat" (due to the Corpus Custodia patterns) and safeguard the security of the tower and its surroundings, endangering not only the mayor but all the inhabitants of the town.

The solution, then, seemed simple: delve into the tower, find where the Corpus Custodia were housed, eliminate them all, leave the tower, collect the reward, and continue traveling. However, this was only in appearance, as, as already mentioned, it would turn out to be much more complicated. Being alone after deciding to repel an attempted assault by the Corpus Custodia on the town the same night of the day they arrived, to try to kill some (which they succeeded in) and study their bodies (as it was not a monster that appeared much in the bestiaries, being a creation made by mages), and thus prepare themselves properly, that they set out to solve the problem.

After resting and preparing properly, they ventured into the tower. Like any self-respecting mage's tower, it was larger on the inside than on the outside. This, along with the need to trace where the Corpus Custodia had come from, took them some time. However, it was a tense yet relatively peaceful time, despite the lurking danger. After a few hours, they reached the deepest part of the tower (Ireneus's laboratory), and engaged in a fierce battle with the Corpus Custodia, as this was where they were housed. In this battle, the future founders of the School of the Crane demonstrated that they made a very effective team.

It wasn't until they attempted to leave that things got complicated. The security system of Ireneus's tower functioned more like a trap and a test to acquire new subjects for the mage's experiments, rather than a conventional security system. The Corpus Custodia were the closest thing it had to a Defensive Regulatory Magicon (DRM). So, Jolanta and Putnam had to face all sorts of monsters and creations in their attempt to escape. This ranged from gargoyles trying to prevent them from leaving the laboratory once the Corpus Custodia were eliminated, to alghouls controlled by magical devices trying to render them unconscious to return them to the lab. The threats escalated with encounters against vodniks, wisielecs, what seemed to be a mutant version of a vespertyl or a vampyrode, a calidus (likely a knight who had been tortured by Ireneus), and finally, a wooden golem. While none of these monsters managed to defeat the pair, they did leave them exhausted and injured.

As a result, and seeing that none of the monsters succeeded in turning them into potential test subjects for the mage, the tower resorted to its final option. This involved releasing large amounts of venomous gas, aiming either to kill them through intoxication or leave them on the brink of death but unconscious (more the second than the first). This led Putnam to make the decision that would change the status of their relationship forever. Unbeknownst to them at the time, it would be one of the most important foundational stones of the future School of the Crane: to kiss Jolanta, in order to share oxygen for the duration of the gassing, and thus, survive.

The "issue" was that during the kiss, which could be considered their first kiss, Putnam didn't just give her a kiss to survive but something more. After surviving the gassing, leaving the tower, collecting the reward, and departing from Iello, the tension between them, stemming from things like the physical attraction they both felt for each other, grew even more palpable. It led to many moments of discomfort, until finally, that tension snapped, and their relationship, which was at that moment, we could say, just beginning, finally came into full existence.

Telawel's radicals in Emele (late October of 1280)

> *"A fair trial? Oh, sure, he can just buy off nobles and judges, escape prison, and avoid the death penalty. Yeah, that's real fair. No, a fair trial is to kill him for what he did to Kiyan. I mean, HE TURNED HIM INTO A VESSEL FOR A DEMON, PUTNAM!"*
> —Jolanta to Putnam after having rescued Ireneus from his kidnapping

After what happened in Iello, Jolanta and Putnam continued their journey, setting their sights on the city of Emele, a city neighboring Iello. Since during the exploration of Ireneus' tower, Jolanta had discovered that it was the last known whereabouts of the mage. Of course, she didn't tell Putnam the true reasons for going to that place (to investigate and hopefully find the mage to avenge Kiyan). She simply mentioned it as a place to go without further explanation, and Putnam agreed, even though he had in mind to travel east, specifically to Dol Tirthana, as he had heard there were job opportunities in the valley. Eventually, Putnam would travel east, though without Jolanta, and not to Dol Tirthana, but much further beyond.

In Emele, the future couple encountered problems, more specifically, one that, while not as direct as the Corpus Custodia, was quite serious. The city, much like Iello, was going through a complicated situation. They would learn all of this once they found a place to rest, specifically at the inn known as the Blood Inn. A member of the local government, specifically the right-hand of the mayor, discreetly approached them to ask for help upon recognizing that both of them were witchers. They offered not a high, but a good amount of money in exchange. It turns out that some radical religious followers of the god Telawel had kidnapped their local mage, who turned out to be, to Jolanta's satisfaction due to her planned revenge, Ireneus. In addition to infiltrating the city's government and maybe some businesses, they likely intended to "purify" its citizens, considering them dishonorable and lazy, potentially causing a massacre. All this was known to the mayor's right-hand man, because he had inadvertently heard about their plans by staying late at city hall one day. They had likely kidnapped the mage in order to brainwash him and make him use a spell similar to Giltine's abortator to kill the population.

Putnam, as usual, hesitated. He didn't want to get involved in troubles; he had already been too affected by politics during his time in Ofir and Zangvebar. He wanted, just as the famous witcher of Rivia, to consider all evils equally and continue his way. However, Jolanta accepted, and Putnam, worried (likely due to his growing feelings for her) about something happening to his companion, ended up agreeing and being dragged along, just as it had happened in Iello.

The task seemed

complicated at first glance, as they were dealing with a conspiracy. However, after both of them thought a bit outside the box, they realized that it wasn't actually that difficult. It was simple: if they rescued the mage (or if they killed him, as Jolanta wanted), there were two possible outcomes. They would either disrupt the plans of Telawel's radicals significantly, preventing the massacre and causing the infiltrators in the local government to flee to avoid capture. Alternatively, the same outcome would occur within the local government as in the previous possibility, but they wouldn't prevent the massacre entirely, only reduce it to something much smaller. This was something they (along with perhaps the local militia) could handle if those radicals had other resources to attack with in case the mage failed (which was a quite high possibility).

Jolanta and Putnam in Emele

And so, they got down to work, teaming up and utilizing their strengths. Putnam would inquire about the city from important figures such as nobles and merchants, using his charisma to coax information from them. Meanwhile, Jolanta would infiltrate their homes to see if they were lying and hiding their affiliation with these religious radicals, or if they knew more than they let on about the mage. The strategy proved successful, as sooner rather than later, two days into the investigation, they finally located the mage (who was in the city's sewers). Additionally, with the extra information that these radicals had once been members of the criminal organization Salamandra, who, seeking redemption for their criminal acts, as well as to regain their honor, had turned into these extremists with a very distorted concept of what honor was.

The rescue that Putnam and Jolanta carried out went well, resulting in a contract less complicated than the one in the tower. These post-Salamandra members did not have the resources that the old criminal organization had, beyond their influence in that city, which was not very significant. It could be said that they ended up like the members who went to Flotsam but, from their point of view, doing "good" instead of trafficking in fisstech and other illegal substances. During the rescue, they encountered the typical sewer monsters but dealt with them without any problem. The problem arose when they encountered the radicals because the morals of the future couple began to clash as they confronted them. Jolanta considered them guilty due to what they intended to do and killed them without a second thought (similar to when the Cats dealt with bandits in Ebbing), while Putnam tried to leave them unconscious most of the time. Due to what he had lived through and done, he believed that these people deserved a chance to reflect and change.

The climax occurred when they overcame a repurposed Greater brother that these radicals had protecting the kidnapped mage. When they reached Ireneus, Jolanta attempted to murder him to fulfill her vengeance for what he had done to Kiyan, and Putnam prevented it. Despite the mage's crimes, Putnam believed he deserved a fair trial. This heightened the tension, eventually leading to a duel between the two. In this duel, Jolanta emerged victorious, finally being able to kill the mage. She also left Putnam with a lip scar similar to hers but on the opposite side. This scar would always remind the witcher with

The repurposed Greater Brother

heterochromatic eyes of her every time he looked in the mirror.

After that, and despite Putnam's complaints, they fulfilled the contract effectively, even receiving an additional payment, as Jolanta took the head of the mage and left it at the town hall. This action caused the infiltrators to reveal their identities publicly by fleeing the city that same day. Some had seen Ireneus's head after leaving a Town hall meeting, and news of his death spread among the infiltrated radicals. This action certainly prevented the massacre that the mayor's right-hand had been worried might happen. With the contract completed, they left Emele and set course for Tretogor, not knowing that what would happen after leaving Tretogor would be the definitive turning point in the change of status in the relationship they had had up until then.

The road to Tretogor (late October - early November of 1280)

The days that passed until reaching Tretogor were peaceful yet complicated. Calm on the professional front but emotionally challenging, one might say. On the professional side, before the events that would unfold in the outskirts of the city that saw the birth of Saint Philippa, Jolanta and Putnam undertook some contracts that were "typical" within witcher standards—nothing like dealing with mage creations or dismantling fanatical religious groups planning a massacre in a city. In other words, a troublesome monster, go after it, eliminate it, get the reward, and leave. The two most notable cases involved therianthropy, specifically the so-called *"Night Terror of Oxenfurt,"* who turned out to be a werecrow. They took on this contract alongside Jolanta's father, Pardus, who happened to be in the city, and a weredog named Zorba, who had been terrorizing people in Coppertown near Tretogor, especially the wives of miners, as he had sexually assaulted some of them when their husbands were in the mines.

This contract was carried out with the assistance of the local dwarf miners' orchestra, led at that time by Addarion Bach. Despite the horrific nature of the weredog problem, the story became, over the years, a curious anecdote. The dwarves in the orchestra noticed the tension and feelings between Jolanta and Putnam, and they playfully teased them to finally get together. Although it didn't happen, it eventually led to a version of the "Witchers' March" song, which turned into a unique mining song titled "Two Fools Madly in Love."

As for the emotional aspect, things were complicated for both, more so for Putnam due to his intense traumas than for Jolanta, all things considered. Putnam's eventual paranoia, which would lead him to leave her in 1281, had its roots there. After Putnam met his technically father-in-law (whom he had reservations about due to his specialty in killing humans but still respected to some extent), he was afraid that going beyond being friends would cause too much harm to Jolanta, just as he had done to a long list of women during his revenge-seeking days, with the exception of D'yaebl. In Jolanta's case, it was simpler. Even though she introduced Putnam to Pardus merely as a "friend," she felt that perhaps she was rushing things and that sooner rather than later, he would leave without saying anything, much like what Vargos did.

The Aberration of Tretogor (early November of 1280)

The arrival in the Redanian capital was calm, within expectations, as the kingdom's capital didn't have much to offer compared to Novigrad. However, it was a different story for their budding relationship. Due to the time of year they had arrived (or so they thought), almost all the inns in the city were overflowing, and both of them were forced to share a bed and room if they didn't want to sleep outdoors. This situation heightened the growing tension between them, to the point where

The so - called "Aberration of Tretogor" that was impeding the Grand Tretorian of 1280, an ornitodracon

they were on the verge of kissing again and things escalating further. However, Putnam withdrew at the last moment, still considering (though not verbalizing) that it wasn't right to do so, and also, it would disturb the other people staying there.

It wouldn't be until the next morning, while both were having breakfast and observing the people, mainly nobles, that they would realize that the almost full capacity of the inns was not normal, and that something was going on. And so it turned out to be; that very morning, they discovered what was happening. The large number of nobles was due to the horse racing event known as the Grand Tretorian, and the near-maximum capacity was due to nothing more and nothing less than the fact that this event had been delayed for several weeks due to a problem with a monster in the area. Neither the Redanian army nor the knights who had passed through had been able to deal with it, resulting in some being either killed or injured. This undoubtedly made it a more than suitable job for two witchers like them.

The job, at first, seemed simple. Apparently, it involved, as already mentioned, a flying beast that had been terrorizing the area for weeks, taking any horses passing through for sustenance (and sometimes unintentionally killing their riders in the process). This created insecurity and prevented the horse racing event from taking place. But like many seemingly straightforward jobs, it would become complicated, and they wouldn't know it until they spoke with the mayor of Tretogor, who had, as expected, put out a contract for the beast. After negotiating for better pay, they set out to tackle the task.

The monster, an ornitodracon, was tracked down and dispatched, resulting in a challenging but not overly difficult battle. Little did they know that this battle would foreshadow the founding of the School of the Crane, 101 years later. The complexity of the contract would come later when, after observing the monster's combat behavior and analyzing its blood, they realized it had been drugged with a concoction of various plants for purposes unknown to them at the time but likely harmful. They debated what to do for a long while. Jolanta wanted to collect the reward and move on since they had "fulfilled the contract." However, Putnam felt there could be a greater danger to people, and, in the typical "Griffin's honor," decided to get to the bottom of it, dragging Jolanta along.

Soon, following footsteps and traces of the plants used in the drug, they discovered those behind the plot. It turned out to be none other than the Scoia'tael command led by Vernossiel, who, like many other commands, after several years of raiding caravans without seeing progress in their cause, had become increasingly radical, resorting to anything to end humans.

Vernossiel and her commando

In their desperation, Vernossiel had drugged the ornitodracon to wreak havoc at the Grand Tretorian, intending to kill as many nobles as possible and cause instability in the country. However, Vernossiel miscalculated, not realizing that the event had not yet started when the monster began its attack, exposing the plan prematurely. The command threatened to kill Jolanta and Putnam, and Jolanta escalated tensions by threatening them back. Since, despite her fondness for non-humans, Jolanta was more than capable of defending herself and taking lives regardless of the race. It wasn't until Putnam intervened that he managed to calm both parties, preventing Jolanta from acting on impulse and causing bloodshed.

Fortunately, as already mentioned, the situation was resolved without bloodshed,

serving as punishment for Jolanta's past actions regarding the incident with the mage and a lesson on second chances (something Jolanta would give to Putnam in the future). Putnam then made the decision for both of them to let the Scoia'tael live in exchange for leaving that life behind and seeking a new beginning, a peaceful life with the stolen resources they had, far from human territories. Initially reluctant, Vernossiel eventually accepted after numerous threats from Jolanta, marking the end of the command led by the fierce elf.

After that, as is customary in a witcher's life, Jolanta and Putnam collected the reward and headed toward their next target, Novigrad. Little did they know how the city that brought them together in person would change them forever.

The Road to Novigrad / Maerlina's baths (mid-November 1280)

The days on the way to Novigrad were a mix of tranquility and complexity, similar to the journey leading up to their arrival in Tretogor, but this time without any contractual obligations. The expected complication arose from the aforementioned, and somewhat redundant, tense tension between them. This tension had been growing since they began traveling together and had nearly erupted into a passionate encounter in Tretogor, were it not for Putnam's intervention. The days were marked by discomfort and lingering silences on both sides. Putnam grappled with his personality and the effects of Survivor's Syndrome, along with thoughts about D'yaebl. On the other hand, Jolanta was uncertain about how to navigate the situation. She sensed a new opportunity for a romantic relationship in her life, but the fear of a recurrence of past experiences with Joël and Vargos lingered.

Despite the cold, on nights when they had to sleep outdoors, they distanced themselves from each other. Despite the discomfort, moments of complicity emerged—a shared smile when recalling amusing anecdotes from their previous solo travels. However, the tension persisted like a thick fog in the air. It wasn't until they reached the outskirts of Novigrad and sought refuge from a stormy night at Maerlina's Baths that the dynamics changed. And finally, the relationship (or at least its first stone, since the relationship wouldn't officially start until winter) that would later give rise to the School of the Crane became a reality.

At Maerlina's Baths, they secured employment—perhaps not the most dignified, but it was work. Their task was to eliminate a pseudorat infestation. These creatures sought refuge from the approaching winter and had settled in the establishment due to the warmth of the thermal waters, causing considerable disruption. In return for their efforts, they received not only much-needed baths but also a place to rest and eat.

After they successfully dealt with the pseudorat infestation, and each of them enjoyed a refreshing bath, the pivotal moment occurred. This turning point in their destinies was thanks to Jolanta, who, claiming her bathing area was undergoing renovations (a big lie), decided to pay a visit to Putnam and join him in the bath without saying anything but approaching him. The rest of what happened that night, one could say, was worthy of any provocative romance written by some shameless bard.

Marabella's Demon (late November of 1280)

> *"Well... Sometimes, monsters are closer than you think."*
> —Jolanta after the case

After taking that significant step into the thermas, Jolanta and Putnam arrived in what, unbeknownst to them, would be the end of their journey—Novigrad. There, understanding the circumstances and knowing Putnam wouldn't make it to Kaer Seren in time, Jolanta offered him the opportunity to spend the winter at her home in Novigrad. Putnam accepted not only due to his feelings for Jolanta but also because of his inability to arrive on time and the burden of guilt for being

perceived himself as the "cause" of the death of three Griffins. He feared returning to the reconstructed Gryphon Keep and facing the (greatly exaggerated by him) consequences he believed would befall him. However, before that winter that would forever mark their lives, they found themselves compelled to undertake one last job together when, like any other day, the city guards appeared in Jolanta's home, asking for help.

The task at hand was no small feat—it involved apprehending a child killer who had murdered several children attending Marabella's School for Tots. The city guard believed the perpetrator to be a monster, given that whoever it was had even managed to eliminate several members of the guard during the investigation. Eventually, they were forced to turn to the only specialist they knew, Jolanta, with the unexpected addition of Putnam. The reality turned out to be much worse than they anticipated. Naturally, they accepted the job. In this case, Putnam took the lead, as anything involving children and death struck a deep chord with him since the death of his adopted son months ago, a sentiment that wouldn't change in the future either.

The first thing they did was negotiate the price for their services and then head to the city morgue to examine the bodies of the guards and the kids, which had been dead for about a week. They discovered that, unlike what the guards believed, this was not a monster or at least a common one. The marks on the bodies indicated that the killer used knives or similar weapons. This suggested that the murderer was either an intelligent being (whether non-human or human) or a rare type of monster.

After leaving the morgue, they spent some time debating while walking towards Marabella's School for Tots. However, they didn't reach any relevant conclusions, except that based on the killer's modus operandi, it had to be small, no larger than a godling at most. However, it couldn't be a godling, as they were not inherently aggressive. Mischievous, perhaps, but not aggressive. If they wanted to make progress, they would have to interrogate the children and their teacher.

As they approached Marabella's School for Tots, a sense of gravity weighed on Jolanta and Putnam. The children's safety and the urgency of stopping the killer added a layer of tension to their steps. The school's facade, usually a lively place filled with the laughter of children, now bore the somber atmosphere of mourning.

Once in the school, they divided the tasks. Jolanta took charge of interrogating Marabella herself, while Putnam focused on questioning the children. The interrogation of the children proved to be a delicate task. Putnam, ever empathetic, took the lead, carefully asking questions to avoid causing further distress. But finally, after a few hours of questioning, both Jolanta and Putnam would stumble upon the key piece of information. Both Marabella and the children mentioned the disappearance of a boy. Furthermore, they revealed that several schoolmates bullied him before his disappearance. Putnam was reluctant to believe it, but the possibility that the child killer, responsible for both the deaths of children and guards, might be another child was more apparent than ever.

The revelation about the bullied boy sparked a grim realization in Jolanta and Putnam. It was a haunting connection that added a layer of complexity to their investigation. The possibility that the child killer was a victim turned perpetrator weighed heavily on their minds. With the newfound information, Jolanta and Putnam decided to delve deeper into the boy's background, hoping to uncover any clues that might lead them to the killer. As they probed into the boy's life, they discovered a troubled history of mistreatment and isolation. The pieces of the puzzle began to fit together, suggesting a motive rooted in revenge and a twisted sense of justice.

The duo faced the challenging task of navigating the delicate balance between

uncovering the truth and ensuring justice for the victims. Putnam's empathetic approach proved invaluable as he connected with the children, gaining their trust and coaxing out more details about the bullied boy's life.

As they continued the investigation, they discovered that the bullied boy, revealed to be named Jacek, had suffered not only from the cruelty of his peers but also from Marabella's negligence in addressing the issue, believing it to be simply *"kids being kids."* But they couldn't blame her; she was already doing a lot by taking care of their education solely based on people's donations.

Thus, they continued working, uncovering more pieces about Jacek's life until, finally, one day, one of the children revealed a key piece of information to Putnam. This information aligned with the days the bodies that were at the morgue had been dead, the patterns of the killer, and his motivation. It turns out that one of the children had played a cruel prank on Jacek, unknowingly disfiguring his face. This incident had triggered a mental breakdown in Jacek, causing him to disappear and subsequently begin his spree of killings.

As Putnam absorbed the shocking revelation about Jacek's disfigurement and subsequent mental breakdown, a wave of understanding swept over him. The cruel prank played by one of the children became the catalyst for the tragedy that unfolded at the school. With this crucial piece of information, Jolanta, Putnam, and Marabella realized the depth of Jacek's torment. The disfigurement, combined with the relentless bullying, had pushed him to the edge, transforming him into a vengeful force. The puzzle was nearing completion, but the urgency to stop Jacek's killing spree intensified.

Guided by the details provided by the child informant, they traced Jacek's steps, attempting to anticipate his next move. Novigrad, usually vibrant, became a haunting backdrop for their pursuit. The trio moved with purpose, driven by a mix of empathy for Jacek's suffering and the necessity to prevent further tragedy. The pursuit reached its climax when they found themselves in an abandoned building in the poor district of the city, a makeshift lair where Jacek had holed up. The atmosphere was tense as they confronted him, a wounded child turned into a ruthless killer. Putnam, with a heavy heart, tried to connect with Jacek, appealing to the humanity buried beneath the layers of pain and anger, but nevertheless, the pain and anger were too much for the child. And in a desperate act, he attacked Marabella, triggering a chaotic confrontation within the dimly lit confines of the abandoned building. Jolanta and Putnam, driven by a mix of determination and sorrow, attempted to subdue Jacek without causing further harm.

Marabella, shocked and injured from Jacek's desperate attack, remained steadfast in her plea for Jacek's humanity. Putnam, with a deep understanding of the pain that had fueled Jacek's violent path as he had lived through something similar, continued his appeal for the child's surrender, hoping to break through the layers of anger and despair.

However, the atmosphere became increasingly tense, the shadows in the room seemingly closing in as Jacek, caught in the grip of his tormented psyche, launched a second attack on Marabella. The weight of the moment hung heavily in the air as Jolanta, faced with an impossible choice between the lesser and greater evil, had to make a decision that would shape the destiny of everyone involved. Without allowing herself the luxury of hesitation, Jolanta, driven by a mix of sorrow, determination, and a somber understanding of the dire circumstances, took decisive action. In a moment that felt like an eternity, she intervened to protect Marabella, choosing the lesser evil and bringing an end to Jacek's life.

Putnam, with a heavy heart, witnessed the resolution of the harrowing confrontation. He had dedicated himself to uncovering the truth and preventing

more tragedy, yet the toll on his empathetic soul was evident. Marabella, though saved from the immediate threat, would bear the physical and emotional scars of the encounter forever.

In the days that followed, they faced the inevitable inquiries from the city guards who sought closure for the harrowing events that had unfolded. They were on the verge of not collecting the reward and being locked up in jail for the murder of a child and other related charges, had it not been for Marabella, who intervened for both of them.

Marabella's intervention proved crucial for Jolanta and Putnam, sparing them from potential legal consequences. She testified to the city guards, attesting to the dire circumstances and the necessity of Jolanta's actions to prevent further harm. While the city guards were skeptical at first, Marabella's reputation as a respected educator and her heartfelt plea swayed their judgment. The city guards, recognizing the complexity of the situation, reluctantly agreed to drop the charges against Jolanta and Putnam and gave them the money for the contract.

Winter with Putnam (late 1280 - early 1281)

The winter that Jolanta and Putnam spent together in Novigrad was, overall, a pleasant one, and it served to deepen their relationship.

During that time, Putnam's traumas became the primary source of problems. His overwhelming sense of responsibility drove him to disappear for hours, venturing into the treacherous sewers of Novigrad to undertake perilous contracts, hunting down wererats and other formidable monsters. Jolanta couldn't help but worry as she witnessed the toll it took on him when he returned home, battered and weary. Otherwise, they were a normal couple, and they did normal couple things.

These contracts were not solely motivated by Putnam's guilt for Jolanta shouldering most of the expenses during that winter. They also stemmed from his subconscious desire to find a noble death in battle, following the tragic losses of Tubiel and Sigurd. This deep-rooted longing manifested into a conscious decision when he attempted to end his own life by poisoning himself with Black Seagull. However, it was Jolanta's timely intervention that saved him from his self-destructive path.

Putnam's Suicide Attempt (mid-December of 1280)

It was mid-December of 1280 when, just two weeks into living together, Putnam would experience one of his lowest points after Tubiel's death. As previously mentioned, he attempted suicide by poisoning himself with a overdose Black Seagull. This suicide attempt occurred on an ordinary day when Jolanta had left Putnam supposedly resting after another dreadful night. She went to buy a few things and visit Eberhatt at his clinic in search of a remedy to help the witcher sleep better and, in some way, alleviate the pain he carried with a better sleep. Unfortunately, like many previous attempts to help him, this one proved futile due to the witcher's mental state, which remained unchanged since that tragic event that ended the life of most of those he once deeply loved.

When Jolanta arrived, she found Putnam with glossy eyes, sprawled on the floor and barely conscious, experiencing a bad trip from the excessive consumption of the hallucinogenic potion.

Distraught and frantic, Jolanta rushed to Putnam's side, shaking him gently. Panic gripped her as she realized the severity of the situation. With a trembling voice, she called out his name, desperately trying to bring him back to awareness, but the witcher didn't answer. Desperate and seeing how the intoxication was only getting worse, she decided, although afraid of drowning him, to give him the Swallow potion to eliminate the overdose of Black Seagull.

As the Swallow potion took effect, a gradual sense of relief washed over Jolanta. The ominous haze that had clouded Putnam's eyes began to dissipate, replaced by a flicker of lucidity. With each passing moment, the grip of the hallucinogenic potion loosened its hold on the witcher. Carefully monitoring his recovery, Jolanta's anxious heart found solace as Putnam's breathing steadied, and his eyes regained focus. Yet, the room remained heavy with the weight of unspoken pain, the scars of this near-tragedy etched into their shared history.

In the aftermath, Jolanta held onto a fragile hope that this pivotal moment could serve as a turning point for Putnam. Little did she know, the journey ahead for both would demand more, and their rocky, but ultimately beautiful story, was just beginning.

Last months together and abandonment by Putnam (mid-December of 1280 - early February 1281)

> *"You, my beloved Jolanta, have been a guiding light in the midst of my darkness. Your unwavering presence has brought solace to my troubled soul, filling the void that once consumed me. But as the days pass, I can't help but question whether I am worthy of the happiness you offer, whether I am deserving of the love that flows so freely from your heart."*
> —A fragment of Putnam´s letter to Jolanta

Yet, despite Jolanta's unwavering support and their deepening connection, the weight of Putnam's traumas grew increasingly overwhelming. The haunting nightmares that plagued his sleep, the jarring awakenings in the dead of night, and the cold sweats that drenched his body—all contributed to the heavy burden he carried within.

As the months passed, Putnam's internal struggles intensified. He couldn't shake the feeling that he was dragging Jolanta down with him, burdening her with the weight of his tormented soul. He believed he didn't deserve her love, her unwavering support, or the affection she so willingly bestowed upon him. The approach of February 1281 only served to amplify his self-doubt and intensify his guilt.

In the quiet solitude of his contemplation, Putnam made the agonizing decision to distance himself from Jolanta. With a heavy heart, he penned a heartfelt letter, pouring out his gratitude for her presence in his life and expressing deep remorse for the pain he believed he had caused her. Alongside the letter, he left a bag of coins as a token of appreciation, hoping it would in some small way compensate for the turmoil he believed he had inflicted upon her.

In his mind, he saw no other path but to release Jolanta from the burdensome ties that bound them. He couldn't bear the thought of dragging her further into the depths of his own inner turmoil. His sense of unworthiness clouded his judgment, blinding him to the profound impact they had on each other's lives.

Saving Fabio Sachs during the explorer's journey to Lyria (1281)

After his argument and separation from Putnam, despite the pain of losing his friend, Fabio would continue with his life and plans, marching to Lyria & Rivia to finalize the remaining details for the expedition to the Far East, which would depart early the following year.

To do this, he had returned to Gors Velen, and from there, he had begun to travel to recruit all those interested, starting with Istredd (who would eventually bring more people with him such as Stucco and Zavist) and ending with Eberhatt of Rivia and his six dwarf mercenaries. They marched towards Lyria, where they would meet to have an audience with the queen so she could personally meet all the participants of this venture. However, they agreed not to travel together and arranged to meet on the outskirts of Lyria on a specified date and time to go

together to the audience. Fabio was afraid that his ambitious venture had been heard of by foreign powers who might try to thwart it, and he preferred to sacrifice himself in that case, as he was likely a probable target, rather than risking everyone else dying because of him. It was a trait, one could say, that he shared with his then ex-best friend who would soon reclaim his title.

And he was not mistaken, for on the way to Lyria, Fabio would be assaulted by what appeared to be a convoy of bandits (which was actually a group of mercenaries hired by the Nilfgaardian Secret Service) to kill him. He would have died there if it weren't for Jolanta, who happened to be nearby and would end up dispatching the supposed bandits without a second thought upon seeing the situation. After that, Fabio and Jolanta would meet, and Jolanta kindly escorted Fabio to his meeting point before continuing on her way. In the process, they engaged in conversation and inadvertently discovered their connection through Putnam (although Jolanta wouldn't tell Fabio about her relationship with the witcher, instead using euphemisms). Fabio told her about Putnam, their friendship, and subsequent argument and separation. Jolanta would be moved by Fabio's story, and despite the pain she felt for Putnam's abandonment, her love for the witcher was so great that after listening to the future explorer tell all, before saying goodbye and parting ways, she encouraged the explorer that if he ever crossed paths with Putnam again, they should talk things out and resolve them. Unbeknownst to her, she would be instrumental in the reconciliation of the two friends and, in her own way, crucial to the future expeditions of the Temerian explorer.

Ironically, the Nilfgaardian Secret Service would try to assassinate Fabio again by hiring a witcheress from the same school and a known acquaintance of Jolanta a couple of months later.

The koshchey of Cintra / The reencounter with Joël (1282)

After Putnam's abandonment, Jolanta continued with her life, albeit not without enduring a challenging period. The formula used to mutate her into a witcheress, like many others from the second iteration of the Cat School, heightened her emotions. This, combined with Putnam's sudden departure and the letter he left, in addition to the prior abrupt abandonment by Vargos, translated into nights of insomnia, crying, and desolation. Jolanta clung to the faint hope that Putnam would return, begging for forgiveness and realizing his mistake. She hoped they could face the torment together. However, as days passed, that hope turned into a dim flame that eventually extinguished.

Despite the difficulty, she gradually recovered and moved on, deciding to leave Novigrad for a while to heal better and pick up her life on The Path, taking on various jobs. With her pain transforming into resentment and the clichéd coldness associated with witchers, which was actually a protective mechanism, and love for Putnam despite everything, she understood that he was a man with many internal demons. Yet, she couldn't fathom his tendency to protect people from himself by distancing himself, as if she were foolish and incapable of helping him in any way. Anger consumed her at times, but so did nostalgia and memories of the happy moments they shared. She vowed not to fall into the clutches of love again, not allowing anyone else to hurt her in that way. However, she had no idea what awaited her upon arriving in Cintra, both professionally and emotionally.

Aside from the bitter memories brought by the now Nilfgaardian province due to the caravan's fall, she would encounter the greatest enemy she had faced to date – a koshchey – and her former teenage love, the former Cat School witcher and now Lynx School witcher, Joël.

Joël (Circa, 1282)

Jolanta had only heard of koshcheys in rumors and legends, giant insectoid monsters capable of causing widespread destruction created through rituals. But when she saw the renewed contract at the border post (since the previous witcher sent hadn't returned), she didn't hesitate to take it despite the risks. It was a significant sum of money, enough to make several improvements to her home in Novigrad and live without worries for a while.

Undeterred by the danger, Jolanta pressed on. Moreover, the lingering resentment she harbored towards Putnam fueled her desire to seek increasingly challenging adversaries. Deep down, perhaps mirroring him back in the sewers of Novigrad, she craved solace in battle, either through death or a temporary reprieve from her emotional anguish.

Furthermore, she felt a pang of empathy for the missing witcher who had previously faced the koshchey. If he was deceased, she wished to grant him a respectful burial. What she hadn't anticipated was that the witcher was Joël, and that he was still alive. Upon comprehending the formidable challenge before him, he had simply opted to meticulously study the monster before engaging it.

As circumstances transpired, Jolanta and Joël joined forces to vanquish the beast, setting aside their shared past and the wreckage of their teenage romance. Together, they defeated the monster and split the generous reward.

However, the koshchey was the product of a Cintrian mage who, after years of research, had created it as an act of vengeance against the Nilfgaardians for seizing his land. Consequently, as both witchers thwarted his plan to terminate the Nilfgaardian occupation through the monster, he devised a new scheme: kidnapping them. He ultimately abducted Jolanta, prompting Joël to her rescue and kill the mage in the process. It was in the aftermath of this rescue that the embers of their love, seemingly, reignited, or at least, that's what Jolanta desperately clung to. As in reality, Joël only wanted a one-night stand, after that happened, he abandoned her without a word the next morning while she was sleeping.

Heartbroken and betrayed once again, Jolanta awoke to an empty room and a sinking feeling in her chest. The echoes of her past pain reverberated, and the trust she had tentatively placed in Joël shattered. The realization of being used for a fleeting moment of comfort stung more than any monster they had faced together. She couldn't fathom how Joël, someone she once held close, could be so callous and indifferent. This brutal betrayal, layered upon the past hurts, solidified the walls she'd built around her heart, walls that Putnam, eventually, would find so hard to overcome.

Murders among the de Valois / stay in Toussaint (early 1283 - Spring of 1285)

> *"We settle it in the old way. Swords. Now."*
> —Nokta shortly before the duel started

After an emotionally challenging year and a half marked by the disappointments of both Putnam (for abandoning her with a letter) and Joël (for only wanting her for a night and not rekindling the love they had during their adolescence), Jolanta finally found some emotional peace (as well as plenty of work) as she headed south. More specifically, to the duchy of Toussaint, and particularly to the city of Corvo. Along the way, she encountered bandits and occasionally some monsters like basilisks, which provided her with a stable source of income.

It would be once she arrived in Corvo that she not only found her highest-paying job but also another opportunity for love. An opportunity that, as would happen to

a certain witcher seven years later, would be ruined by the ghosts of her past.

The job arose when, coming out of a local tavern, a young noblewoman named Laura de Valois approached Jolanta. Recognizing her as a witcheress, Laura offered her an opportunity impossible to refuse due to the money offered. It involved investigating who had been responsible for her father's murder, utilizing Jolanta's training, skills, and witcher mutations. The family had found him poisoned one day, leading to disputes over the inheritance and accusations among the various members of the noble family in Corvo. As it was more than obvious, Jolanta accepted. It would be in this case that she would meet the opportunity for love, in the form of a knight who was Laura's brother, named Alexandre Nokta Laurent de Valois or Nokta for short. He would assist her in the case as he was starting his vacation after a long period serving as a knight protecting the duchy's borders when his father's death occurred making him the only innocent in the family at that time.

Nokta

Thanks to Nokta's help, the case was quickly resolved, revealing that Nokta and Laura's uncle was the one who had orchestrated it. He was arrested and subsequently hanged. Throughout the case, both Jolanta and Nokta began to feel an attraction towards each other, and once it was concluded (despite Jolanta's usual disdain for nobles), they ended up having a night of passion. Nokta was everything Jolanta had ever dreamed of - attentive, chivalrous, kind, attractive, and idealistic (though excessively so) - essentially, a knight who seemed to have stepped out of a fairy tale at first glance. However, he had his flaws, which later came to light.

Despite his initial charm, Nokta displayed flaws as the relationship progressed. It was revealed that he had a tendency to be possessive and overprotective, making Jolanta feel stifled at times. Additionally, his extreme idealism (greater than that of Putnam) led him to make impulsive decisions without considering the consequences. Though charming at first glance, Nokta showed that, like any person, he had imperfections. Nevertheless, his virtues, at a second glance, outweighed his flaws, and so, Jolanta, unknowingly (combined with other factors like the abundance of work), ended up living for two years and two months in Toussaint, experiencing an almost idyllic life along with the Valois.

But everything that goes up must come down, and that, in the end, would happen suddenly in late spring of 1285. When the ghosts of Jolanta's past, unintentionally, would resurface once again and bring down what Jolanta believed was a strong relationship but was simply a house of cards that could collapse with just a gentle breeze.

And this gentle breeze would be none other than Putnam himself. Who, after Fabio's expedition ship had to stop in Cintra, in order to take as little time as possible to reach Lyria & Rivia so that Fabio and company could promptly inform Meve of the results of their expedition, he would part with his friends and continue his life as a witcher, passing through Toussaint to replenish supplies (and perhaps do some work on the way), heading to Aedirn to deliver Lukasz's letter to Adalwulf, making, by chance or not, a stop in the city of Corvo. Where, unwittingly and unknowingly, he would put an end to the relationship of his now ex, with Nokta.

And this would happen in a way that could be classified as stupid, to say the least, when Putnam, leaving to buy ingredients in "More than 1000 remedies for you and your family," an herbalist and alchemy store in the city, would accidentally bump into Nokta's sister, who had gone to buy things for that day's dinner,

between her, her parents, and Nokta and Jolanta, causing her to drop several ingredients on the floor, and the pretty dress she had, to tear a little. Putnam kindly helped her, and after that, they started to talk, and Laura, to flirt with him, because she had found him attractive. If her brother could have a witcheress for a girlfriend, why not her have a witcher for a boyfriend? So, they were chatting for two hours, which worried Nokta, who was waiting for her outside the city. So she went to look for her and finding her with her dress torn and next to the witcher, she feared the worst and challenged the witcher to a duel for having "sullied the honor of her family and her sister." Putnam, several times, said no. Laura tried to stop him, but Nokta did not listen. Putnam was about to leave, but Nokta prevented him, and finally, the duel took place, congregating a curious crowd from all over the city around.

During the duel, tension filled the air as the curious crowd watched the unfolding spectacle. Putnam, driven by a desire to avoid unnecessary conflict, maintained a defensive stance, expressing his reluctance to engage in combat. Nokta, fueled by a mix of protective instincts and wounded pride, persisted in challenging the witcher.

As the duel progressed, it became clear to the onlookers that Nokta's emotions were clouding his judgment. His swings were fueled more by anger than precision, while Putnam skillfully parried and dodged, trying to avoid causing any harm. The crowd's initial curiosity turned into murmurs of concern, realizing the uneven nature of the contest.

Laura, who had unintentionally sparked this confrontation, grew increasingly distressed by the unfolding events. She tried to intervene, pleading with her brother to end the senseless duel, but Nokta's determination persisted. The clash continued until Nokta, exhausted, wounded, and emotionally drained, stumbled and fell to the ground.

After that, Putnam apologized to Laura and walked away, leaving her heartbroken for not being able to pursue a relationship with him. Nokta, wounded and emotionally drained, was taken to a doctor. After receiving medical care, they would eventually return home, albeit a bit later than planned for the dinner Nokta had organized, where Jolanta was eagerly waiting.

Upon their arrival, Nokta, still recovering from the duel, explained to Jolanta what had transpired. He described the witcher involved and the accidental encounter with his sister, Laura, in the herbalist and alchemy store. As Nokta recounted the events, a sense of recognition dawned on Jolanta, realizing that the witcher in question was none other than Putnam.

The revelation stirred a whirlwind of emotions within Jolanta. The ghosts of her past, embodied by Putnam, had unexpectedly reappeared, shattering the semblance of stability she had found in Toussaint. Deep down, she still harbored feelings for him, and she understood that what she had experienced and felt with Nokta could never be compared to the connection she shared with the bi-colored-eyed witcher.

Jolanta's heart wavered between conflicting emotions. The idyllic life she had built with Nokta seemed to crumble as the memories of her past love resurfaced. She grappled with the realization that, despite the flaws and past heartaches, Putnam held a unique place in her heart.

As Nokta continued to recount the events of the duel, Jolanta's internal struggle became more apparent. The echoes of her past love with Putnam reverberated through her, creating a complex web of emotions. The stability she thought she had found with Nokta now hung in the balance, and the path forward seemed uncertain.

Unspoken tensions filled the air as Jolanta tried to navigate the conflicting emotions within her. The ghosts of her past had not only disrupted her present but also cast doubt on the future she had envisioned with Nokta. The bi-colored-eyed witcher had unwittingly become the catalyst for a storm that threatened to unravel the carefully constructed threads of her life in Toussaint.

And so, in the quiet aftermath of Nokta's revelation, Jolanta faced a daunting decision — a choice between the stability she had found with Nokta and the tumultuous, yet undeniable, connection she still felt with Putnam. Making what, that same night, would break up with Nokta, and leave, Toussaint, with the vague hope, to find him again, and resume the love so unique, that once, they came to have for each other. Something what, would happen, but not at least in the way Jolanta would have liked in the short term.

An encounter with Adalwulf (June 1285)

In the aftermath of her breakup with Nokta, approximately two weeks later, Jolanta found herself overwhelmed with regret over her impulsive decision. Fueled by this remorse, she resolved to reconcile with him. However, her hopes for a reunion were shattered when she learned from Nokta's sister that he had not departed to fulfill his duties as a knight protecting Toussaint's borders. Instead, he embarked on a mission, as Nokta himself expressed, to *"rid the world of all evil, injustices, and pain."* This quest also aimed to restore his tarnished reputation, damaged by his relationship with Jolanta and his defeat in a duel against Putnam. It became evident that this was also Nokta's coping mechanism for dealing with the breakup.

Driven by concern for Nokta's well-being and fearing the potential madness that might have consumed him, Jolanta embarked on a desperate search. After a few days of meticulously following his trail, she discovered his sword and, subsequently, a trail of blood leading to a cave. Confronting a formidable opponent in the form of a giant centipede, specifically a pale widow, Jolanta pressed on. In the cavern's depths, she made the discovery of Nokta's lifeless body.

The scene unfolded before her like a haunting tableau, confirming the tragic fate that had befallen her former lover. The cavern resonated with the silence of loss as Jolanta grappled with the weight of her impulsive decisions and the irreversible consequences they had wrought. The vanquished giant centipede, though symbolic of life's formidable challenges, served as a stark backdrop to the demise of a man who had once held a significant place in Jolanta's tumultuous journey.

Consumed by guilt after bringing Nokta's body back to his family, Jolanta sought solace in drinking as a means to cope with the intense emotions triggered by the mutation formula that transformed her into a witcheress, as well as the death of Nokta. It was during one of these moments, in a tavern in Aedirn, that a heavily inebriated Jolanta encountered Adalwulf of Aedirn. Adalwulf, who would later become one of Putnam's close friends, listened as Jolanta vented her frustrations about Putnam and Nokta to the patrons. She declared things like Nokta had abandoned her to pursue "the greater good," following Lebioda's teachings, a narrative that was more a half-truth, a lie Jolanta told herself to cope, and that Putnam considered her stupid and that's why he abandoned her with a letter, etc. In her volatile state, considering all men the same, Jolanta's anger escalated, leading to verbal confrontations with the patrons. Adalwulf had to intervene and escort the distraught witcheress out of the tavern, preventing a potential altercation with the customers.

Ironically, this unfortunate encounter would serve as a first point of connection for both witchers once they met shortly thereafter. Making Jolanta, one of the causes of their friendship.

Working and brief relationship with Biruta Icarti / amnesic period (July - late August of 1285)

After her almost idyllic life in Toussaint collapsed, Jolanta returned to spending winters in Novigrad, while fully returning to The Path. This time determined that her romantic or personal life would not take precedence over other goals, which were varied. However, life still had more surprises in store for her.

And it all began with her passage through Kerack, when a mysterious messenger, recognizing her as a witcheress, and more specifically as the one who, along with another witcher, defeated the koshchey that ravaged Cintra, handed her a message, telling her to go to Rissberg Castle, where they had an offer for her, and so Jolanta did after careful consideration. And it was true, as one of their most recent experiments had escaped after they tried to sell it at the castle market to an interested party, killing him, injuring several others, and causing quite a bit of destruction.

In the castle of the mages, they explained to her that they had managed to get a witcher before, but he hadn't returned, and if she wasn't interested, she could reject it, however, upon hearing the description, and realizing it was her adoptive father, Pardus, she accepted. Moved both by the money offered to her in advance, and by ensuring that her father was okay.

During the tracking process, she would be joined by Biruta, the mage responsible for the escaped experiment, who had returned to Rissberg after what happened in Aretuza in 1272, feeling responsible (or at least that's what she appeared to be) for the disaster caused, offering support through the use of magic (especially in saving her time by using portals).

The tracking took time, leading them both to Brugge. And during that time, partly because of the various disappointments she had had with the male gender, and Biruta, because of the usual lasciviousness and promiscuity among her guild, they began a brief relationship (or at least what appeared to be one), which ultimately would be equally or more disastrous than Jolanta's previous male disappointments.

During the journey, Biruta explained to Jolanta what the experiment was about, and how revolutionary it was. It was nothing less than a leshen, created in a laboratory. Through a mixture of magic, alchemy, and science, she had managed to subdue the spirit, giving it a new body and making it obey, serving to use its abilities to regenerate forests and thus create a kind of controlled logging. However, Jolanta knew little of Biruta's dark intentions. Nevertheless, Jolanta already suspected something, albeit very little. The mage had shown excessive interest in the leshen, as the mages of Rissberg cared little if their creations escaped, for "there would always be someone to kill them."

Finally, they found the experiment, after having crossed all of Verden tracking it, it had taken refuge in the forests of the kingdom, specifically on the border near Brokilon, as if the realm of the dryads somehow attracted it. They found it, thanks to the trail of corpses, both human and animal, that it had left behind.

Once they found its trail, they divided the work. Biruta would be responsible for protecting the nearby villages in case the leshen sent its hounds, and Jolanta would kill the creature.

However, at that moment, Biruta took advantage to betray Jolanta. After all, no one could know what the experiment was. Not even the mages of Rissberg, with all their knowledge, knew what Biruta had created; they had only tried to stop it in the process while it escaped, unsuccessfully. And at the moment Jolanta defeated the leshen, Biruta attempted to use mental magic to control it, partially succeeding, and thus causing Jolanta to suffer a blow to the head at the last

moment, which left her unconscious and later amnesic.

And so she was, at the mercy of predators and the nearby dryads, if not for a young farmer who happened to pass by. The young farmer, whose name was lost in the annals of history, was poaching in the forests of Brugge when he came across the scene. Jolanta, unconscious and bloodied, lay on the ground next to the experiment's body. The farmer, despite the danger it posed, approached cautiously. Upon recognizing her as a witcheress, and moved by compassion, he decided to help her.

The farmer carried Jolanta on his shoulders and took her to his modest home. There, he cleaned and bandaged her wounds. Fortunately, Jolanta only suffered a concussion and amnesia along with relatively minor injuries. With time and the farmer's care, she gradually recovered.

Upon awakening, Jolanta remembered nothing of her past, except her own name. Disoriented and vulnerable, she relied entirely on the young farmer. The farmer, with his kindness and patience, guided her in her recovery. He taught her to live a simple life, away from the dangers and violence of her past as a witcheress. She learned to cook, tend to the garden, and raise animals. She fell in love with the peace and tranquility of the farm, and with the farmer's kindness and generosity. Developing a romantic relationship, which unfortunately for the farmer, was brief, due to her memory soon returning. Furthermore, he was murdered by mercenaries who suddenly appeared at the farm. Jolanta tried to save him, but since she hadn't fully regained her memory by then, she could only defend herself from the mercenaries and prevent them from doing certain things that are so common in wars.

Devastated by the death of the farmer, Jolanta was forced to flee the farm. She didn't know who was chasing her or why, but one thing was certain: she couldn't stay there.

So, determined, she began the search for Pardus, hoping that her adoptive father was still alive and could somehow help her. After all, he had accepted the contract first; perhaps he knew something about the mercenaries and why they had tried to kill her.

And finally, she found him, and he helped her recover her memory. However, not in the way she expected. Pardus was dead, his body had been decomposing for weeks, the body, despite lacking a head, was recognizable, as Jolanta could tell it was him by those artificially grown arms after consuming katakan mutagens.

She examined the body, discovering that he had been stabbed by several swords and a dagger after dying, probably for fun, judging by the punctures; she recognized that they were at least the same type of weapons that the mercenaries who were after her used. Weapons of Vinlandic origin, while putting her memories in order, the training in Dyn Marv, Vargos, Putnam, Joël, Nokta, and lastly, Biruta and the leshen.

Soon, sooner rather than later, she would find out that Pardus had discovered Biruta's plans after observing how a dryad passing by fled unnaturally from the leshen, stealing the money they had paid him in advance and having gone to the distant duchy of Vinland, where, while waiting for them to forget about him, he made the mistake of believing that the influence of the mages would not reach there, saving a couple of Skræling women from being violated, and thus being unjustly condemned to the gallows for that, because one of the ruling dukes, the youngest, was pro-Nordling, Vagvul, and was being heavily influenced by the mages. After his death, his body had been thrown through a portal, as Vagvul did not want to "contaminate his land with the corpse of a mutant", and his head was cut off and delivered to Biruta, as proof of her loyalty to the mages.

So determined to uncover the truth, Jolanta prepared herself, getting some dimeritium to deactivate any magical alarm, and set off for Rissberg. Knowing that she would likely be in danger if she went directly, she decided to sneak into the castle, using a method similar to that of a certain famous white-haired witcher.

And with the stealth of the animal her school represented, she infiltrated the castle. And using the sewers and ventilation ducts, she managed to access the mages' private quarters, arriving sooner rather than later to Biruta's, which she recognized by the characteristic perfume the sorceress used, permeating the entire room with roses and apples.

There, she found the mage. And in a move worthy of the best predator, she caught her off guard. The mage, cornered, confessed her plans, as well as how the aforementioned Pardus had died, for there was her adoptive father's head, kept in formaldehyde.

Biruta had created the leshen not to care for the forests and promote forestry, but to control them. Her plan was to use the monster as a weapon to eradicate the dryads of Brokilon and take control of their lands. Which she would then sell to the rulers of the bordering kingdoms for exploitation. Making herself rich, and surely sooner rather than later, obtaining the knowledge of the dryads' magic. And everything about the escape, the death of the interested party in the leshen, etc... had simply been a false flag attack, to prevent her competitive colleagues, who now looked down on her from her degradation to teaching in Aretuza and her return to the castle, from unmasking her or getting in the way of her plans. She also told her, that she always lied to her and that she would capture her and experiment on her as revenge for trying to put and end to her plans, as well "for science" to improve what Ireneus in the past did with the Cat Witcher, Kiyan.

Jolanta, with Biruta's confession ringing in her ears, looked at her with a mixture of fury and disgust. The mage, in an act of desperation, cast a spell against her, but Jolanta, with her mutant reflexes, dodged it. Drawing her steel sword, she launched the attack.

The battle was brief but brutal. Jolanta, driven by anger and a thirst for revenge, did not hold back. She dealt a mortal blow to Biruta, cutting off her head with a single stroke. The mage's head rolled on the floor, her eyes still open with terror.

However, Biruta's death would not go unnoticed by the mages, and because of this, Jolanta would be considered a criminal of the highest level, once again having to join and work for the Redanian Intelligence Service in exchange for receiving protection and avoiding being pursued by the mages. Reluctantly, Jolanta accepted the offer, knowing it was her only option to stay safe and move on with her life.

After fleeing the castle, she knew her vengeance was not over, and determined to fulfill it, she set sail for the distant duchy of Vinland to confront the young duke for what he had done to her adoptive father, without knowing that life had another surprise in store for her, one that she had not expected to encounter again for four years, although deep down she wished for it.

Brief time in Kerack (September - October of 1285)

After escaping from the castle, Jolanta sought refuge in the nearest places, which led her back on the road to the city of Kerack. Since it was a port city, she recognized that, with great effort (due to her phobia of the sea), she could take a boat and escape without leaving as clear a trail as she would by land.

However, in Kerack, before her incipient revenge could even take a concise form, something significant would happen, despite its small scale, which would become another key piece in the events that followed. She found refuge in the city when a

jeweler named Sainne took her into her home in exchange for stopping the thieves who had robbed her jewelry store.

Afterward, Jolanta stayed in her home, and the two developed a brief but intense relationship. In a moment of vulnerability, Jolanta pledged her loyalty and love to Sainne, envisioning a future together. However, their idyllic union was shattered when Sainne, driven by greed and self-preservation, betrayed Jolanta to the Nilfgaardian authorities present in the embassy of the city-kingdom in exchange for the bounty placed on members of the School of the Cat by Nilfgaardian soldiers after the fall of the caravan.

Revenge for Pardus' death (Spring - Summer of 1286)

After escaping from the castle, as previously mentioned, she continued her revenge while rejoining the Redanian Intelligence Service, primarily as an assassin, honing her stealth and assassination skills even further. It took some time to execute her revenge, due to the turbulent aftermath of Biruta's death, waiting for the waters to calm down a bit before proceeding. Thus, she wouldn't make significant progress until the spring of 1286.

The Redanian Intelligence Service, besides protecting her from the mages, in exchange for her working for them for a period of 15 years (the time it took for her crime to prescribe), also assisted her, albeit in a subtle way. After all, she had worked with them before, and they knew she was a valuable asset and, more importantly, loyal. So, they didn't mind doing that extra favor, allowing her to head to Vinland after giving her a clue that would set her course for Oxenfurt.

An unexpected gift in Oxenfurt

Following the trail to find the one who ordered the death of her adoptive father, Jolanta would pass through the city of Oxenfurt. There, she would receive an unexpected gift, which would be quite useful to her but also leave her quite confused. As she passed through the city, after confirming that the mercenaries who had killed her adoptive father had unexpectedly been released from Deireadh prison after a foreign man paid a hefty sum of farthings to free them, Jolanta decided to visit the Borsody Auction House. Carrying a large amount of money while traveling was never a good idea, and the wealthy were always the tightest with their purse strings, so it was likely that this person had sold something from their land to the auction house to pay the mercenaries' bail. Jolanta was certain that she wouldn't discover it identity, but she could at least deduce it probable origin based on what it had sold, and she could go there to make it pay for what it had done. And so she did, for after managing to gain entry by posing as a potential buyer for the current round of auctions, she learned that an item recently acquired by the auction house, just a few days ago, came from the distant duchy of Vinland, giving her a target to pursue.

What she didn't expect was that after the auction round ended, an employee would recognize her and tell her that there was something for her, a gift from a buyer who had passed through some time ago. Jolanta was surprised, but it piqued her curiosity, and she wanted to know what it was. She was even more astonished to find that it was none other than the silver sword of the founder of the second iteration of her school, the sword known as the Rose of Shaerrawed, which was believed to be lost after the Aelirenn rebellion in the 1060s. Jolanta wasn't foolish, and she accepted it, for as the saying goes, "don't look a gift horse in the mouth." But it left such a mark on her that she wanted to find out who the buyer was who had obtained it and left it in her name, believing that she would someday come to the auction house to claim it. Finding out sooner rather than later, and after an intense argument with the worker who had given her the weapon, stemming from her insistence on learning the buyer's identity and a failed attempt at bribery, which caught the attention of a cleaning lady who inadvertently revealed a physical characteristic of the buyer, his heterochromatic blue and green cat eyes, Jolanta finally managed to find out who it was. It had

been none other than Putnam. It was rare to find another with those feline bicolors described by the cleaner on the continent. And that surprised her even more. It had been five years since their paths had crossed, since he, in his foolish sense of honor and responsibility, had abandoned her so as not to "drag her down with his inner demons." Why had he done this? What did it all mean? Jolanta didn't understand. Was it merely a gesture of goodwill because he had remembered her in the moment? She couldn't dismiss the possibility, she was still angry with him but at that moment, she was also confused. What if it signifies something more profound? Those questions were left unanswered for a time, since Jolanta had a revenge to fulfill, and without a second thought, with Putnam's gift in hand, she set out for Vinland, not knowing that, as life would have it, she would cross paths soon with him again.

The Amikuks Hunt of Vinland / The reencounter with Putnam (Summer, 1286)

> *"Fine. Go then. Chase after your destiny or Fabio's, whatever it may be. Just know this: when the sea finally stops whispering your name, as your poetic phrase goes, you might find it doesn't answer back when you call mine."*
> —Jolanta to Putnam during their breakup in Vinland

After finally arriving in Vinland, Jolanta got down to work to avenge her adoptive father. First, she went after the mercenaries who had taken fun with his father's corpse, and finally, she targeted Vagvul, the young duke of the diarchy who had ordered her father's death.

It was during the beginning of her stay in the distant duchy that she would meet a jeweler whose name would be lost to history, only remembered as a tall, blond man with whom she would establish a relationship, initially one of convenience but eventually growing to a certain fondness. Unbeknownst to him, he would serve as support to Jolanta by offering her a home in the country while she was finishing off her adoptive father's killers, both direct and indirect, as well as connections that would facilitate her revenge, due to his work for Vinland's upper class. However, this time would be short-lived because as Jolanta carried out the assassinations of the mercenaries, Vagvul became increasingly paranoid, fearing that the older duke who co-ruled the diarchy of Vinland with him, Falmak, was trying to kill him. This led him, in growing paranoia, to poison the jeweler, Jolanta's lover, one day when he invited him to the palace, leaving the matter as an apparent accident.

This left Jolanta alone, returning to the typical life of a witcheress, taking contracts around the country and living in taverns and inns. Until one day, thanks to the connections in the upper echelons of the deceased jeweler, combined with the tense political situation in the country, she was finally able to approach Vagvul when he was not only looking for an effective bodyguard but also an excellent hunter for his team, after he and the older duke organized a hunting tournament to settle their disputes fairly by betting on absolute control of the duchy, as well as to eliminate one of the most pressing issues they faced: a plague of amikuks that was affecting the entire country, destroying crops, and attacking people.

No one had been able to put an end to this plague, which created tensions between factions with a more Nordling mindset and those who did not share it. The Nordling faction accused the Skræling tribes of being responsible for the plague, fueled by the discrimination that the tribals still faced. Some within this faction even proposed exterminating the Skrælings as a solution to the problem. Despite the closure of mines and the blocking of other underground locations, these monsters continued to appear. On the other hand, the opposing faction argued that it was not the case and that they suffered from these monsters just as much. This faction also advocated for the promotion of cultural blending and syncretism with the Skræling tribes. In fact, Falmak had a Skræling wife and six sons of mixed heritage.

These two factions were represented by the two dukes already mentioned, Vagvul, the younger duke who led the more Nordling-minded faction, and the elder Falmak, the leader of the other faction. Tensions had reached such a point that, had it not been for an agreement reached between the dukes, a civil war would have erupted.

This agreement was based on an ancient tradition from the early days of Vinland, which involved a hunting tournament that would traverse the entire country, in this case, to exterminate the amikuks. The rules of the tournament were simple: whoever accumulated the most amikuk heads would be declared the winner. Cheating was not allowed, as any team caught doing so would be exiled from the duchy.

However, Vagvul, upon accepting this agreement, set a condition for Falmak. The condition was that the winner of the hunt would be chosen as the sole duke of Vinland, with the other duke relinquishing their title, granting the victor absolute power and the freedom to govern as they wished. If the amikuk problem persisted even after the hunting tournament, the winner would have the opportunity to prove their method of eradicating the plague without opposition.

And Vagvul, who fell head over heels for her at first sight, quickly accepted her into the team, allowing her to be very close to him, unaware that nothing would ever happen between him and Jolanta, that Jolanta was actually just using him, and that this would indeed be his downfall.

What Jolanta didn't expect, as mentioned before, is who she would encounter at that tournament when the day to gather at "The Grey Snowball" tavern in the capital, Hóp, arrived—none other than Putnam, who was in Vinland as a member of Fabio Sachs' expedition to the Far North, as she entered the tavern. As on that day, it seemed that all the teams had gathered there to finalize preparations before the tournament began. If they hadn't done so in a separate location, it was to provide everyone with the opportunity to switch teams if they wished, regardless of their reasons.

Upon seeing her, Putnam felt a surge of shame after abandoning her with a letter and a bag of coins five years ago. In that moment, he remembered the more recent letters he had written and sent in less than ideal states, asking for forgiveness. That explained why there had been no response. She was just as beautiful, though more tired, a clear sign that she had been through a lot. He wondered what had happened to her. He also fervently wished that their gazes wouldn't meet, but Jolanta had also recognized him the moment she entered, casting him a glance filled with all the terrible emotions that the witcher had evoked through his abandonment.

The teams for the amikuk hunting competition consisted of a total of six teams, each led by one of the dukes or a prominent member of the local nobility. Putnam, Fabio, and the rest of the expedition, joined Duke Falmak's team. This team also included several experienced hunters and skilled warriors, such as Falmak's own bastard daughter, the renowned Lady Knight Sioni.

The other major team in the competition was led by the already mentioned Duke Vagvul, who had recently inherited the position from his father, Lestec. Vagvul's team was known for its aggressive hunting tactics, and he was determined to win the competition to solidify his rule over the duchy. The team comprised experienced warriors, many of whom had served in Vagvul's personal guard. Jolanta, being the only woman on the team, as already said, had been included due to her status as a witcheress and Vagvul's infatuation with her.

As a curious note, Putnam's immediate dislike of Vagvul was fueled not only by the duke's racism but also by his arrogance, pomposity, and overall foolishness.

Vagvul's slimy behavior towards Jolanta only added fuel to Putnam's anger and frustration. His constant attempts to impress Jolanta with empty words and false charm further irritated Putnam. While he respected Jolanta's autonomy and understood that it was her choice whether to entertain Vagvul's advances or not, Putnam struggled to contain his urge to confront the arrogant duke.

Throughout the ordeal, Fabio and Istredd attempted to calm Putnam, serving as his voice of reason and trying to dissuade him from engaging in a physical confrontation. They managed to calm him down on several occasions, but their efforts were ultimately futile in preventing Putnam from challenging Vagvul. His deep-rooted protectiveness over Jolanta and his disdain for Vagvul's slimy behavior overpowered any rational thoughts that urged him to restrain himself.

Jolanta's thoughts after that ranged from "just men being men" to the belief that the young duke deserved to have his nose broken. Ironically, thanks to Putnam, she saw an opportunity to get even more closer to the duke and exact her revenge for what he had done to Pardus.

The third team was a knightly order led by Limmdetr Jarumson, a minor noble and the son of one of the jarls who ruled over one of the provinces within the duchy, specifically the northernmost one. He had recently returned from the region known as Gotland, as called by the Vinlandi, where he had attempted to convert the tribals to the faith of Tyr Svetovit alongside his men, but their crusade had failed. It would be the first time the expedition heard of that region upon meeting them, and after that they planned to depart for Gotland once they finished their stay in the duchy. As expected, Limmdetr supported Vagvul.

The fourth team was comprised of a group of merchants and mercenaries from the region known as Kvenland by the Vinlandi. These individuals had been friends with Falmak for several years, and their decision to join the tournament had a simple motivation: they wanted to abolish the excessive taxes imposed on them based solely on their ethnicity when conducting trade. If they emerged as the winners, their goal was to eliminate all the racist laws enforced by Vagvul, laws that Falmak had been unable to repeal due to the limitations of his governing power in the diarchy. It was through their encounter with Fabio's expedition, that Fabio and his companions learned about the region, and they discussed the possibility of including a visit to Kvenland in their plans, depending on the final route they chose after the conclusion of the tournament.

The fifth team was known as The Collectors of Spirits, or "Wakinyan Cikala" in the Skrælings' Common Language used in Vinland. It was comprised of skilled warriors from various Skræling clans. They were led by Brem, a mixed Skelliger / Skræling noble who served as both a rival to Vagvul and an ally of Falmak. Brem possessed a profound understanding and respect for the ancient traditions and beliefs of his people, vehemently opposing Vagvul's discriminatory policies targeting both mixed and pure Skræling populations. To Brem, the amikuk hunting competition provided an opportunity to showcase the strength and skills of his people while paying homage to the spirits of the hunted amikuks.

The team consisted of approximately 30 highly skilled warriors carefully selected for their exceptional hunting abilities and deep spiritual connection to the land. They were equipped with traditional weapons and were renowned for their stealthy and respectful hunting tactics. Initially hesitant to participate in the competition, Brem was eventually persuaded by his ally Falmak, who recognized the chance to enhance their prospects of victory and ultimately strip Vagvul of his power.

The last team consisted of a group of raiders from the region known as Heluland by the Vinlandi. Just like with the other teams, upon meeting them, the expedition learned about a new region and considered the possibility of passing through there once they had a more detailed route planned, rather than just an

idea. These raiders had joined the tournament in support of Vagvul, as the young duke had promised them that if he or any of his allied teams emerged victorious, Heluland would be annexed to Vinland, granting them better living conditions and enabling them to retire from their raiding lifestyle.

It would be two days later after the reunion of all the teams in The Grey Snowball tavern that the competition would begin.

The initial days were challenging for Falmak's team, and they fell significantly behind the other teams. Jolanta, who had been in the duchy longer than Putnam, took the lead by successfully killing several amikuks, allowing Vagvul's team to maintain their first position, at least for the time being. The same applied to other teams, including Limmdetr's knightly order, whose experience in dealing with monsters during their failed crusade in Gotland gave them an advantage. During this period, Putnam was fortunate enough to eliminate one or two amikuks while sustaining minor injuries. However, he quickly learned from his mistakes, delving deep into the study of this monsters and refining his skills. By the end of the first week of the tournament, Falmak's team managed to secure the second position, trailing closely behind Vagvul's team. It's worth noting that Istredd's role as the team's healer and Eberhatt's more disciplined utilization of his lycanthropy also played a significant part in their progress.

The initial interactions during the tournament between Jolanta and Putnam were complicated and, above all, tense. Although they didn't want to engage with each other, they were forced to do so whenever the different teams crossed paths and compared the number of amikuks that they had hunted. They tried to maintain a professional demeanor, but their shared past weighed heavily on them, making it nearly impossible. Jolanta, with her cutting wit, couldn't resist making sarcastic remarks whenever Putnam spoke, reminding him not only of their shared past but also referencing the witcher's emotionally turbulent life. Since Jolanta had crossed paths with Trill and even visited Marina's tavern in early 1282 when Putnam was still the talk of the regular patrons. Her encounter with Marina left her conflicted about what she thought of Putnam. Putnam, on the other hand, attempted to brush off these comments or justify himself but eventually gave up following Istredd's advice. In the words of the multifaceted mage, *"With women like Jolanta or Yennefer, it's not worth arguing because you'll end up losing most of the time, believe me."*

Her encounter with Trill, prior to visiting Marina's tavern, left her unaffected. The fact that Putnam had left another woman with a letter didn't surprise her at all. It was her visit to Marina's tavern that left her conflicted about what she thought of the so-called "Golden Griffin." It's worth mentioning that as soon as Marina's regular customers recognized Jolanta as a witcheress and began talking not only about Freyja but also about Putnam, who had been the most recent topic of interest, Jolanta was on the verge of leaving. She wasn't particularly interested in hearing about her ex. But in the end, curiosity and the inclement weather outside got the better of her. While waiting for her meal and during her meal, she attentively listened to the stories that customers shared about Putnam. Some of the tales seemed like typical behavior that Putnam would engage in, while others pleasantly surprised her. This led Jolanta to engage in conversation with the non-humans present at the Red Crow, posing as Putnam's "sister-in-law," which, at some point, had been the truth.

Eventually, the customers caught Marina's attention and informed her that a relative of Putnam was present, in case she wanted to say anything if they were to meet before during his return to the Red Crow from the Far East. This led the two women to meet and converse. Jolanta couldn't help but feel a twinge of jealousy regarding the treatment and relationship that Marina and Putnam had had. At the same time, she was surprised, as she wasn't mistaken about the good man she had seen in Putnam beneath the layers of pain that the witcher carried and refused to let go of. It's worth mentioning that what surprised her the most

was the healthy breakup they had, without letters or stupid bags of coins as if she were a whore from the Passiflora. Perhaps he had changed, or perhaps not. Maybe he had only done so out of guilt for abandoning her. But her encounter with Marina couldn't help but leave her with those conflicting feelings about him.

On Putnam's part, despite claiming to have moved on from Jolanta, it wasn't the case. And acts like breaking Vagvul's nose, said more than his words, no matter how much he justified himself by saying that he had done it because he was an asshole and needed a lesson, which was only a half-truth. Besides, Putnam was a terrible liar. And anyone could tell that. But Jolanta and Fabio more than anyone else.

It wouldn't be until the passing weeks, reaching the end of July 1286, that the tensions between the former couple started to ease, and gradually, the remaining embers of their relationship would reignite the fire. From Jolanta's perspective, it was due to the changes she had observed in Putnam – his willingness to accept help and not bear the weight of the world on his shoulders alone. Although he still had that tendency, it had diminished. She could perceive it in the way he expressed himself, his mannerisms, and how he approached his teammates to form a team when he felt overwhelmed.

Even at night, when Putnam would wake up from his nightmares, their camps being separated by a certain distance (this was the case when they couldn't stay in cities or villages), his heightened senses allowed him to overhear Putnam's conversations in the early hours of the morning, whether it was with Fabio, Eberhatt, or Istredd. These conversations piqued Jolanta's curiosity as she listened to how the witcher opened up completely to them without feeling guilty. On the contrary, he welcomed their advice and made an effort to apply it. It was something she wished he had done when they were together.

In addition to these factors, Jolanta was also grappling with the death of her adoptive father, which she was struggling to cope with. She had also experienced the deaths of several members from the School of the Cat close to her, who were killed by bounty hunters. Along with the failures in her already mentioned various relationships, both of before and after meeting Putnam. The abandonment by Vargos, the rejection by her teenage love, Joël, after attempting to rekindle their relationship only to be used for a one-night stand, the misguided ideals of Nokta, the unfulfilled promises to the farmer who saved her life, the lies of the sorceress Biruta Anna Marquette Icartim, who as already said only wanted to experiment on her and turn her into a worse abomination than Kiyan, and even the most recent betrayal of a young jeweler from Kerack, who, after pledging a life together, betrayed her in exchange for the aforementioned still active bounty placed on the members of the School of the Cat by the Nilfgaardian soldiers after they had taken the caravan. All of this weighed heavily on the shoulders of the back then Cat witcheress.

But it wouldn't be until they arrived in the city of Leifsbuðir, famous for its hot springs, halfway through the tournament journey, to rest for a few days after traveling a long distance without seeing any civilization, that they would truly be together again. And it all happened because of something as simple as a romp in the hay. At that point in the tournament, the raiders of Heluland were leading the competition, boasting the highest number of amikuks hunted.

The initiative would be taken by Jolanta, who, tired of her loneliness and Vagvul (whom she was on the verge of killing, but there was always something that interrupted the potential murder), sought out Putnam (although initially with the intention of a quick fling). She asked the locals for his whereabouts and headed to the hot springs. There, she found him, along with a couple of monkeys that occasionally used the hot springs and had become friends with Putnam (he had even given names to the monkeys), as well as his dog Frey. It was a comical scene, but Jolanta wasn't in the mood to play along with the animals. So she

shooed them away, including Frey, who tried to give her puppy eyes but failed to convince Jolanta. Putnam for his part remained a silent observer, but with a amusing smile in his face, his gaze filled with a mix of fascination and tenderness as Jolanta undressed, revealing the new scars adorning her body.

Shortly after what happened in the hot springs, Jolanta and Putnam found themselves drawn to each other again and again. What started as a quick fling soon turned into a series of passionate encounters. They couldn't resist the magnetic pull that brought them together, despite the risks and limitations imposed by the tournament.

In the secrecy of their meetings, Jolanta and Putnam not only indulged in their physical desires but also engaged in deep conversations about their lives, hopes, and shared past. It was in these stolen moments that they rediscovered the connection they had once shared and realized that something precious from their history had remained intact.

Both Jolanta and Putnam had endured their fair share of hardships and heartbreak. Putnam, haunted by the tragic deaths of the women he had loved before, found solace and healing in the presence of Jolanta once again. Being with her helped him overcome the fear that had consumed him for so long, allowing him to embrace their renewed connection without reservation.

For Jolanta, these clandestine meetings provided a much-needed escape from the burdens and disappointments she had faced. She had become disillusioned with her search for connections and had come dangerously close to losing herself in the cold and calculated ways of a significant part of the School of the Cat. But being with Putnam rekindled her excitement and reminded her of the warmth and compassion she had once possessed.

Unfortunately, although time seemed to stand still when they were together, it was only a perception, and the tournament continued with each of them giving their best for their teams. The attitude of Putnam and Jolanta, since their quick fling at the city's hot springs, shifted from tense to sportsmanlike. This surprised everyone who had endured the tensions of the now-rekindled couple throughout the tournament, but no one said anything because deep down, they were grateful that the drama had subsided. The only one who suspected something was Fabio, who knew Putnam too well to easily sense that he and Jolanta were involved again. Putnam never denied it; he simply remained silent, as he enjoyed the secrecy of their renewed relationship. And he found it particularly amusing to come up with monster-related excuses to justify returning to the team with marks or disheveled clothing.

So, the weeks passed, and the tournament became a fiercely contested competition, with the teams including Putnam and Jolanta vying for the top spot most of the time. It was so fiercely contested that even at the end, when the team of the old duke was declared the winner, Vagvul exclaimed that Falmak's team had cheated and falsified several amikuk heads (a nonsense accusation), denying the results and almost triggering the civil war that the tournament was supposed to prevent. However, Jolanta finally managed to take her revenge by causing Vagvul to slip and fall off a cliff, resulting in his death. Nobody suspected foul play, and it was regarded as an accident.

The dilemma now, at least for Putnam, was deciding between two paths. During his time with Jolanta, they had once again discussed a life together. However, there was Fabio, his expeditions, and the sense of duty and loyalty Putnam felt towards his friend for saving his life and not letting him perish in the ruins of Magne as Tubiel had intended. He had sworn to himself that he would go to the ends of the earth for Fabio because of that act. But on the other hand, he longed to be with Jolanta again and live together in Novigrad, to make it up to her for abandoning her, as he deeply regretted his past actions. Jolanta had even

promised him that she would surely find plenty of work cleaning monster-infested sewers (which was partially true) so he wouldn't have to worry about "living off her" as he did in 1281. The monster population in Novigrad's sewers had grown significantly, and they could live together there for a while, and then retire to a peaceful and secluded place with the money they earned, perhaps a farm or something similar.

It was a tempting offer, incredibly tempting. The life of peace and tranquility that he could never fully achieve with Tubiel (and had promised and failed Marina), was within his grasp once again. But in the end, he rejected it. He owed too much to Fabio and couldn't leave him alone in his quest to unravel the world's secrets and map Terra Incognita. However, there was a substantial change in his attitude this time, albeit small in appearance, that would be crucial for the future, both for him and for her. He didn't abandon her with a letter. He confronted her, and they broke up face to face. It was difficult for Putnam, as he dreaded seeing Jolanta's heart break again, but he felt it was necessary. Fear is often overcome by facing it, and so it was.

Putnam was honest, and the breakup, although painful, was a healthy one. Even before leaving Vinland to venture further north with the rest of the expedition, Putnam became poetic and promised Jolanta that when "the sea stopped whispering his name," they would be together again and would never part. Ironically, that poetic phrase would prove prophetic, as they wouldn't be reunited until almost the end of the 14th century, once the Silk Islands and the Western Continent had been discovered and colonization had begun. Specifically, on May 11, 1381, Putnam's 126th birthday, they would be together again. Life kept them separated for a long time due to various circumstances, despite their attempts to reunite once more.

The Liliger (1286 - 1288)

> *"The world doesn't dole out happy endings for witchers. We take what we can get."*
> —Pardus of Korath (1282)

Once her revenge was over, and after the breakup with Putnam, Jolanta returned to the Northern Kingdoms. With a broken heart due to the witcher and a feeling of emptiness because although she had achieved justice, she no longer had her adoptive father. But unlike Putnam, who in her circumstances would have filled that void with flings, and maybe even other drugs in addition to the Black Seagull's potion, Jolanta decided to focus on her "work" because, after all, she was still under the protection of the Redanian Intelligence Service until the crime of Biruta's death was prescribed, which unfortunately hadn't happened yet, leaving plenty of time.

Thus, she spent the following years as a spy and assassin, becoming the living stereotype of a witcher without feelings, and that of the first iteration of the Cat School. A cold and unfeeling assassin, giving an almost alien feel, like the Cat Witchers of Stygga were described compared to the volatile and emotional Cat Witchers of Dyn Marv. Under her former codename of The Liliger, she killed many targets and even became a sort of legend in her own right, striking fear into Redania's enemies. She earned the nickname "The Bloody Mary" among other intelligence services due to her bloody results after killing a target. However, despite the fact that Jolanta wanted to get rid of her humanity after all the sentimental disappointments she had lived through, in addition to the misfortunes she had experienced, it would still be there, covered under the cold armor she had put on. A shell that, in the year 1288 due to events experienced, would finally break.

At some point in early 1288, Jolanta responded to letters Putnam had sent her after his failed marriage to Alanna asking for forgiveness for abandoning her. Jolanta's responses to the letters were mixed to say the least.

The Ashes of the Eternal Fire (Summer of 1288)

> *"They say the Eternal Fire illuminates the path, but all I found were ashes and a darkness far worse."*
> —Jolanta during the fire of the Temple of the Eternal Fire in Novigrad

The first event that cracked Jolanta's armor, though it didn't make her fall, happened in the summer of 1288 when she was tasked with assassinating the hierarch of Novigrad and leader of the Church of the Eternal Fire, Cyrus Engelkind Hemmelfart, who was considerably older for that time. Many were tired of his presence, believing that he was extending his life through various means, such as using the Mandrake Longevity Potion. However, the reality, although undiscovered and lost to time, was far more grim. The goal was to replace him with someone more favorable to Redania, thereby absorbing the city-state into the kingdom's territory. This assassination would uncover, poetically speaking, the ashes left behind by the "illuminator" Eternal Fire, which nobody had seen amidst the flames. It revealed an extensive network of pedophilia involving not only priests of the Eternal Fire but also high-ranking religious officials and even nobles from all the Northern Realms and Nilfgaard, who visited the city for "that kind of tourism." The discovery of this network allowed Jolanta to break through her cold, emotionless assassin persona, as the atrocities inflicted on the children reminded her of the abuse she suffered as a child. Such was the empathy she felt that she even ended up setting fire to the temple of the Eternal Fire after dismantling the terrible network.

Following the assassination and dismantling, Jolanta also gained a favor, a favor that would demonstrate how the winds of destiny could move things quite far. As Cyrus Engelkind Hemmelfart, hypocritically, had made a pact with the enigmatic Gaunter O'Dimm to secure his position, Jolanta, by killing him, unknowingly did Gaunter a favor by expediting the moment when Cyrus's soul was due. Furthermore, Gaunter was in competition for this soul with another rival, another "merchant" with whom he had made a wager. In this instance, Gaunter emerged as the victor. So it appears that the speculated Cosmic Horror/Entity owed her a favor, and he remained true to his word against all odds.

Naturally, as he approached Jolanta in a tavern and their conversation unfolded, she gradually dismissed him as a madman who believed he could grant wishes. Nonetheless, this did not dissuade Gaunter; since Jolanta played along, hoping he would fulfill the "wish" he owed her and then depart, leaving her in peace. It is said that Gaunter offered her three fundamental human wishes—fame, fortune, and power—along with a mysterious fourth one.

Jolanta rejected the first three options. "Fame?" She had plenty of reputation, albeit a mixed one, and if greater fame meant more travel and enduring bards' songs about her or Putnam's love life, then that was a no-go. "Fortune?" After dismantling the pedophile network, she had not only been paid well but had also seized considerable assets. In fact, she could finally buy Crippled Kate's brothel next to her home in the Glory District, expanding her residence and sparing herself from the presence of both prostitutes and their clients. "Power?" She had zero interest in delving into politics beyond what the Redanian Secret Service might offer her as a job. So, she opted for the fourth, without considering the consequences it would entail (fortunately, these turned out positive). The fourth

wish was for "something she secretly desired but didn't know."

Following this, Gaunter is said to have smiled, clapping his hands three times, and what followed was the sound of a tremendous blizzard in summer from outside, prompting everyone to glance out the window to see what was happening, only to realize that no adverse weather phenomenon had occurred. By the time Jolanta went to ask Gaunter what had transpired, after glancing suspiciously at her drink, wondering if she had been drugged, he had simply vanished without a trace. After the encounter, Jolanta returned home to rest, and just as she was climbing the stairs, she felt a sudden wave of relief, as if she knew that something was now right, unlike before. It was a peculiar sensation, but she didn't dwell on it. This sensation was unknowingly saving Putnam's life and that of his friends in the process, as they were about to freeze to death in the Great Glacier in the Far North.

Convergences (End of August - Beginning of September 1288)

> *"You shouldn't be here, Putnam. This isn't your fight."*
> —Jolanta to Putnam during the final stages of their duel

> *"It becomes my fight when innocent people are getting killed."*
> —Putnam to Jolanta during the final stages of their duel

The second event that would crack Jolanta's emotional armor occurred at the end of August and the beginning of September that year. It happened when Kasper Ombars, the new head of the Redanian Intelligence Service after Dijkstra retired to live out his remaining years in peace, presented her with an important mission that she could either accept or reject. Temeria was on the brink of signing a treaty with Zerrikania in the city of Carreras. In exchange for various resources that the distant matriarchy lacked, Temeria would receive the most advanced military technology available from the distant country. This would prevent Redania from exerting its influence over it despite losing control.

The mission consisted of nothing more and nothing less than assassinating several important members who would be present at the treaty signing, including the new king who, after years under the regent interrex's rule, finally ascended the throne. In exchange, the Redanian Intelligence Service had negotiated with several influential mages favorable to Redania, who would help ensure that the crime committed by Biruta's death could be deemed less severe or prescribed earlier than planned. Seeing the opportunity for her crime to be pardoned sooner and to live more peacefully, Jolanta accepted. However, Jolanta would not be alone in her mission, as a mole would infiltrate the trade treaty and act in such a way that Jolanta could carry out her assassinations undetected. However, in the end, unforeseen consequences would force Jolanta to change her plan.

Despite more than a decade having passed since the historical era known as the Iron Judgment in Nordling history, the echoes of that period of Radovid V's reign continued to reverberate. And if there was one trait that characterized the Redanian monarch, aside from his well-documented flaws and baldness, it was his unyielding tenacity and boundless ambition. From Temeria's perspective, there remained no doubt that, despite past setbacks, Radovid's insatiable drive would inevitably lead him to reclaim his mantle as the "Protector of the North." So, renewed attempts to annex neighboring kingdoms were expected sooner or later.

Furthermore, the potential trade treaty with Zerrikania held the promise of significant advantages for Temeria, potentially elevating the kingdom from its current weakened state. This prospect garnered staunch support from both the aristocracy and the Temerian Intelligence Service. However, they were also convinced that Radovid would vehemently oppose such progress, given his vested interest in perpetuating Temeria's vulnerability for his own political gains. And they were right, Radovid V wanted none of that to happen, as a resurgent

Temeria could potentially challenge Redania's regional power (Kovir was neutral, Kaedwen had its own issues to resolve and the other kingdoms weren't powerful enough)

This had also been the reason why Temeria, to the treaty had called upon observers from other realms, under the pretext of ensuring there were no traps or misunderstandings. In reality, it was to gather forces from different kingdoms in the area to defend it in the event of a Redanian attack, as the chosen fortress city for the meeting would be even more protected. This would include various intelligence services, which could prevent an assassination if that was another of the Redanian monarch's plans. With the Temerian military still recovering and the kingdom's finances strained, hiring mercenaries from Kovir was financially infeasible and thus not a viable defense strategy. However, Jolanta didn't know that; she only knew that this would complicate her mission. One mistake during the assassination, and a war could start because of her fault.

It was this very circumstance that would unexpectedly reunite Jolanta and Putnam once again, two years after their breakup in Vinland, as Putnam accepted a job as a bodyguard of the Temerian king due to his lack of funding.

This calling of observers from other kindgoms ensured that the treaty and the subsequent celebration went smoothly, while Jolanta, with the help of the mole, calculated her moves to carry out the various assassinations. The plans, however, were further complicated by the presence of three sorceresses, Anika, Keira, and lastly Nasira, whom she already knew from more favorable circumstances. One representing one of the neutral observers, Kaedwen, Keira representing Temeria, and Nasira representing Zerrikania. Who could pose a problem if the assassinations were not carried out perfectly. However, in the end, events would unfold in such a way that two of the three sorceresses would not pose the great problem they could have been. A relief for Jolanta, as they would have been formidable rivals and, moreover, she would have felt sorry to kill Nasira, due to the arrangement of her mutations that she had made years ago.

Another obstacle was Putnam, whom she had not expected at all and who provoked mixed feelings in her. Seeing him again after two years of their breakup awakened things in her that she tried to repress throughout the mission, but which eventually proved impossible. Failing while observing him closely to do that, and believing that, if by chance, the assassinations were discovered, he would go to protect the weakest along with the sorceresses, and would leave the king exposed for his assassination. Since, unbeknownst to her, he was tasked with the king's protection.

The last obstacle was the witcher who accompanied Nasira, the Manticore Witcher, Teirgh, who, in addition to being attractive to her, she sensed his experience and that he could be a problem if things went wrong and she was not as stealthy as planned. However, his attitude during the treaty of not wanting to be there made her trust that, if the case arose, he would not be as much of a problem as her ex, Putnam. To sneak into the treaty, unlike the mole, due to her mutations, she used an altered version of glamarye, which not only enhanced her beauty but also modified her face and applied to the throat also the voice. Which, added to her training as a spy that allowed her to imitate accents perfectly, a little makeup, and the presence of the sorceresses, made her not suspicious.

Jolanta look under the effects of the modified glamarye

Jolanta then, well disguised, with her assassin's gear hidden under an extravagant but elegant dress of Toussaintoi origin, and as Janela Yioma Maria Derman Gaurs, a supposed bourgeois woman from Gors Velen, recently widowed, heiress to an important commercial maritime company, began to seduce her victims and carry out her assassinations at the party after the signing of the treaty, taking advantage of her improved physique and the help of the mole to attract her victims towards her, and kill them. Also taking advantage of a moment to let herself be carried away by her impulses and stain Keira's dress for flirting too much with Putnam.

The first assassinations went well, however, they were too many for the very little glamarye she had on hand to use and go unnoticed. Which, forced her to shed her extravagant dress, revealing the agile form honed by years of training, missions and contracts, and don her assassin's gear. Melting into the shadows and relying on her mutated and honed senses and stealth to eliminate the next remaining ones.

However, when she was about to carry out the next assassination of her assigned targets, her plans went awry when the corpses of her victims were discovered. Causing the celebrations to be halted due to the tragedy. And that Jolanta, had to improvise to eliminate her pending targets.

Following the disturbing turn of events and the subsequent halt in festivities, interrogations commenced. It was implausible that someone had simply breached the tight security measures in place. Thus, there had to be a mole. Among the attendees, Nasira, Keira, Teirgh, Putnam, and Anika volunteered to conduct interrogations and resolve the situation. Keira and Putnam represented Temeria, Nasira and Teirgh represented the other party – Zerrikania – while Anika acted as a "neutral observer" in case the incident was somehow orchestrated by either of the two sides involved in the trade agreement for any reason.

With the group thus divided into three, Nasira and Teirgh took charge of the interrogations to uncover the mole. Keira assumed Putnam's role in safeguarding the monarch (as investigating murders wasn't her strong suit), while Putnam and Anika worked to determine the whereabouts of the assassin or assassins and apprehend them. Initially, Putnam argued that his duty was to protect the Temerian king, as specified in his contract. However, the monarch himself ordered him to handle the investigation, reassuring him that Keira could temporarily take over without issue.

And so, Anika and Putnam embarked on their investigation. They were led to the scene where the bodies had been discovered – none other than the latrines,place where Jolanta had taken her seduced victim . A most undignified place to meet one's end, yet remarkably suitable for carrying out an assassination or do more intimate things.

Nasira and Teirgh for their part, quickly identified the mole – a high-ranking member of the Temerian Intelligence Service who chose to end their own life using a poison known as cantarella, thwarting any further interrogation. Faced with the limitations of not being able to employ necromancy, Nasira and Teirgh ventured outside to examine the potential points of entry for the assassins. They meticulously searched for any clues that might lead them to the culprits, but their efforts proved futile. Whoever had committed the murders had been astute enough to cover their tracks effectively. Thus, after an exhaustive sweep of the area, Nasira and Teirgh reluctantly returned to the group.

Now, the situation rested squarely in the hands of Anika and Putnam. They divided their task of uncovering the mastermind behind the killings based on the bodies found. Anika conducted a thorough examination of the corpses, while Putnam analyzed the blood traces, hoping to trace them back to the killer or

killers. Unfortunately, Putnam´s efforts hit a dead end as the sample was contaminated due to the shock the bodies' discovery had caused among those who found them.

It wasn't until Anika, as sharp as ever, discovered a piece of metal while removing the clothing from the corpses and examining them closely. As she handed it over to Putnam upon his return, he realized, upon analyzing the depth of the wounds and the cut, that it was caused by a Redanian dagger. This revelation confirmed that the killer or killers were at least affiliated with that kingdom.

Armed with this lead, they returned to the group to share their findings and engaged in a heated debate about the next course of action. However, at that very moment, Jolanta, struck with inhuman swiftness that not even the two present witchers could detect in time, claiming another victim right before their eyes. Determined to stop it, Putnam sprinted after the assailant, with Anika closely following him to provide backup if needed. But before doing so, Anika quickly instructed Keira, Teirgh, and Nasira to evacuate everyone from the area and ensure the safety of all. The urgency to prevent further deaths was unanimously agreed upon, without a single word spoken.

It was a long and exhausting pursuit, but it helped Putnam uncover that the assassin had consumed Blizzard, as he had been able to recognize that high speed that made "time stop" for the user if they were in danger. This revelation gave Putnam another clue – the assassin was a witcher. This led him to dismiss the possibility of multiple killers. With this knowledge, he was motivated to push himself harder, attempting to corner the assassin and bring justice for the deaths caused.

He succeeded with the assistance of Anika, who cast a spell that blocked the assassin's path, though she suffered several minor injuries in the process due to being attacked by the Jolanta, despite Putnam's efforts to protect her. While she didn't lose consciousness, she was weakened and needed time to recover on the ground. Nevertheless, her actions provided Putnam with the necessary opening to defeat the assassin due to the blocking spell she had cast, preventing any escape from the place they were in. Or so he thought, as the situation would prove to be more complex than a simple duel.

This duel took place in the palace greenhouse where they were. It was a whim of the count who owned the place, who, after visiting Toussaint and seeing the Royal Palace greenhouse, wanted something similar for himself. The duel transcended mere skill; it became a battle of wits, utilizing all the plants and especially the trees to hide, attack, and defeat the enemy. It also turned into a battle of attrition, as both were confined within the greenhouse due to Anika's spell, which served to fortify the area. As a result, they couldn't, for example, break the glass and escape if they wanted to. However, it's possible that if Putnam had recognized the assassin promptly, things might have unfolded differently. Unfortunately, because the assassin was entirely covered, except for

Jolanta and Putnam fighting

the eyes which revealed their mutant nature, Putnam didn't realize the truth until the end. By that point, exhaustion was getting the better of both of them, causing them to become more careless and sustain minor as well as some slightly deeper wounds in the process.

As the duel continued and despite his initial confusion over the weapons his opponent wielded, given that she was using two short swords like a Viper witcher, Putnam gradually recognized her identity by observing and analyzing her combat patterns. These patterns were something he could identify anywhere, but his earlier confusion had prevented him from doing so. Seizing the opportunity while the battle raged on, Putnam decided to play a psychological game with his adversary in an attempt to gain the upper hand. Trusting his instincts about her identity, he uttered the words, "Jolanta, you don't need to do this." Surprisingly, this tactic worked, revealing that the assassin was indeed, Jolanta. However, hearing Putnam's voice again and the unexpectedly familiar and affectionate demeanor threw off the Cat witcheress, leading to her rapid defeat.

However, just as Putnam was about to corner Jolanta by grabbing her shoulder and pressing her against the glass to unveil the reason why she had been sent to kill those people, Anika's spell unexpectedly dissipated. The abrupt disruption caused both combatants to lose their footing, resulting in a fall onto a nearby balcony overlooking the Ismena River. The impact of the pressing without the spell working shattered a glass panel of the greenhouse, serving as a dramatic backdrop to their descent.

On the balcony, the fight didn't continue, at least not physically, as they were too exhausted from both their wounds and the combat. Instead, it turned into an intense discussion until Anika, now recovered and concerned about Putnam's situation, entered to look for him, overhearing part of the conversation. This made Jolanta aware of Anika's entrance and her hurried approach, which made her nervous.

In that moment, Jolanta impulsively kissed Putnam, leaving him confused and providing her with an opportunity to escape. By the time Putnam might have pursued her, it was already too late – she had leaped from the balcony into the Ismena River, seemingly facing certain death. Miraculously, she survived the fall, as she used the Sign of Shadi before falling to the water, disappearing from the scene and evading capture forever. When Anika arrived, she found only a wounded Putnam to attend to, prompting her to inquire about what had transpired and who the woman he had been speaking to was.

However, Anika didn't receive an extensive reply. Putnam simply told her that it was nobody, someone he knew, yes, and that he hadn't expected to encounter there, but it no longer held significance.

Leaving the palace was an impossibility without either leaping off the balcony to certain death or retracing their steps and confronting everyone. Thus, finally they found themselves in a state of safety – the assassin was deceased, and further fatalities had been averted; that was the crucial outcome. The specifics were of no consequence. However, the predicament remained only partially resolved, as potential future assassination attempts lingered. Yet, Putnam remained hopeful that the Temerian Intelligence Service would competently address this concern, and the limited success of these recent attempts might deter Redania from replicating such actions or initiating a a more direct attack, at least temporarily. Anika refrained from commenting on this matter, sensing beneath Putnam's veneer of apparent professionalism an emotional impact stemming from the events that affected him more than he was willing to acknowledge.

After that, Putnam would collect his reward, using a piece of cloth stained with Cat witcheress's blood ripped from her clothing during the duel as evidence, and consider Jolanta as deceased. He would reply only to Jolanta's letters,

responding to the ones he had sent her long ago, which he found accumulated at Kaer Seren, as a way to "close the wound," not expecting a response due to her apparent demise. This set his course toward what would unfold with Keira (finding a certain solace in the sorceress of Carreras), grieving for Jolanta and her presumed death in the process. And later, nearly two years after those events, he would enter his first enduring marriage after visiting Kerack.

Agent of Change (1288 - 1330)

The outcome of Jolanta's mission, despite her successful assassination of several key targets, turned out to be a failure. Although Temeria would take time to recover, it would eventually do so. The intention was to cause such chaos with the murder of these targets and the king that the treaty with Zerrikania would be broken. This would either be achieved by installing a new puppet monarch favorable to Redania or through annexation, enabling Redania's army to be improved with the Zerrikanian technology promised to Temeria by the treaty. This failure almost led to her being hanged by Radovid V. However, her past successes, which outweighed her failures by a considerable margin, made the monarch reconsider, allowing her to live in exchange for continuing to work for the Redanian Intelligence Service a little longer, not just until the statute of limitations for Biruta's death expired. Thus, Jolanta remained entangled in Nordling politics for many more years.

Acting from the shadows, as a proficient spy and assassin, she became a key player in many different events to come. From the War of the Two Unicorns in 1309, designed to weaken Kaedwen and turn it into a state, if not a vassal favorable to Redania, when she falsified a birth certificate so that one of the claimants to Kaedwen's throne, who was actually a bastard, could claim the throne. This action started the conflict that would end in 1318. She was also involved in the mysterious deaths of several members of Kerack Royal Dynasty, which eventually with another factors, led to the kingdom's fall and absorption by Cidaris, and in occasional rebellions. In the case of the rebellions, she used all she had learned not to serve others' interests but to help the most vulnerable, mainly non-humans, leading to improvements in their rights. These were glimmers of humanity that she occasionally let out, despite the world forcing her to survive in the other way. Deep down, although she wouldn't admit it, this acts of seeding rebellions were, because she was also influenced by Putnam's more idealistic worldview.

During this long period, she didn't pursue any new romantic relationships, not even fleeting encounters, paid or unpaid, as others might have done. After all, she was still affected by her disastrous past in that aspect and decided it was better to dedicate her life to her work and try to make the world a better place in her own way.

A Shattered Dream (1290s - 1300s)

Sometime between the 1290s and 1300s, a flicker of hope rekindled within Jolanta. Despite the scars of their past, she clung to the belief that she could rekindle what she once shared with Putnam, perhaps even forge something stronger. Utilizing her vast network, she tracked him down in Kerack. Coincidentally, she had a mission that took her to the very same city. Seizing the opportunity, she planned to confront him after the mission, to see if there was a chance to rebuild their connection.

However, her heart shattered when she discovered Putnam was married. He had built a new life with Aine, the elven lighthouse keeper of the city. Jolanta opted to remain unseen, a silent observer of his newfound happiness. This heartbreaking discovery, coupled later on with Putnam's disappearance and presumed death during the four years following his participation in Fabio Sachs' last expedition, along with many other reasons, cemented her decision to remain unattached for many years until Teirgh reappeared in her life in 1330.

"The Silver Manticore" (1330 / 1332 / 1336 / 1340 / 1347 / 1353 - 1360)

> *"Fine. Maybe you're right. We are poison for each other. Another failed relationship to add to the pile. Here's to hoping the next monster I face is easier to dissect than this mess."*
> —Jolanta during the end of her relationship with Teirgh

How Jolanta and Teirgh met was quite simple. Like many other witchers, they met on The Path. More specifically, in the Nilfgaardian province of Magne, where, despite the apparent nearing completion of the witchers' ultimate goal, there was still work to be done due to the attacks patrols faced from monsters in the nearby Korath Desert, seeking easy prey. In addition to occasional raids by Aen Manche elves looking to plunder resources, Jolanta didn't take those contracts due to her sympathy for the elves; in fact, she would help them. It was during this time that the rest of the freckles that would appear on Jolanta's body and face showed up. During this period, Jolanta faced a multitude of flying monsters, unknowingly paralleling Putnam and his battles against aquatic monsters, laying the groundwork for the future specialization of the School of the Crane in aquatic and flying monsters about 50 years later. Notably, she faced off against a kaur, a monster akin to a vulture and somehow related to griffins, an argema, a desert-adapted type of ornithosaur, a maghogl, a fly-like monster also adapted to the desert, and most importantly, a sand roc, a subspecies of roc adapted to arid environments. It was during the process of defeating this sand roc that she saved Teirgh's life. He had decided, instead of adequately preparing for the monster, to simply strike it as hard as he could with his weapons until it stopped moving, as he lacked the funds to buy the necessary resources to face the sand roc without risking as much as he did.

Thus, after saving his life and Teirgh recovering, they began traveling together through the rest of the Northern Kingdoms and Nilfgaard, taking contracts here and there, mainly against bandits and occasionally against some monsters due to the slow recovery of certain populations affected by phenomena related to the imminent arrival of the Second Conjunction of Spheres, which would happen 28 years later. During this process, they grew closer to each other, and before long, they had an intimate encounter that led to a relationship.

Teirgh (Circa, 1330s)

As a failed experiment from the first iteration of the School of the Cat, Teirgh had numbed emotions. He wasn't entirely devoid of feelings like the early members of this witcher school, but his emotions were muted. For example, while others might have felt rage during a betrayal, Teirgh felt a dull ache, and instead of fear gripping him, there was a cold emptiness. This emotional numbness, combined with his change to the School of the Manticore and his veteran status, along with his early training years with the first Cats (before the corrupted mutations and other experiments that granted him expanded youth but made him unable to use Signs), which taught him to harshly repress his emotions, made his personality by the mid-14th century stoic, cynical, lonely, and possessing an almost unsettling pragmatism.

When Jolanta started a relationship with him, as had happened in the past with

Putnam, it made their relationship complicated, albeit in a different way than with the Griffin. While the strained relationship between Jolanta and Putnam stemmed mostly from Putnam dealing with his traumas and survivor's guilt, in Teirgh's case, it was because he struggled to connect emotionally, largely due to his emotional numbness and the already mentioned harsh early training with the first Cats that taught him to repress his emotions before changing schools. This difficulty in emotional connection significantly affected their relationship, especially given Jolanta's heightened emotions as a member of the second iteration of the School of the Cat. Unlike Putnam, who was an emotional paradox but could understand Jolanta emotionally, Teirgh found it challenging to reciprocate emotionally. This meant that, for example, despite eventually remaining faithful to each other despite the distances, they would sometimes travel together for a while doing contracts, then after an argument, spend months apart, then come back, then have a more intense argument (at least from Jolanta's perspective), separate for years, come back, and so on.

This fundamental difference in emotional experiences, along with various other reasons that unfolded over time, created a unique tension in Jolanta and Teirgh's dynamic. Despite their efforts to make their relationship more serious, it eventually led to its end after the events of 1360. The first of these was the encounter between Jolanta and Putnam during the Kilanti/Haaki invasion of 1350. which, apart from proving to Jolanta that she still had feelings for Putnam, would provoke a depression that would last 10 years after Putnam played the hero in the invasion, was seriously wounded, and the doctors wrongly considered him dead, in a way, making a parallel with the situation that Putnam lived from 1290 to 1300 when he believed Jolanta dead and that affected his marriage to Aine. For although Teirgh and Jolanta had achieved some sense of stability, due to this depression of Jolanta's, their relationship gradually degraded, until eventually, it became unbearable for both of them. Teirgh, unable to fully comprehend or address Jolanta's emotional turmoil, grew increasingly frustrated by her distant demeanor and mood swings. Jolanta, yearning for a deeper connection she felt Teirgh simply couldn't provide, found herself dwelling on the past and her unresolved feelings for Putnam. The second of these was, as already mentioned, the events of 1360, or more specifically, what happened after them. By that year, Jolanta and Teirgh had been trying to resolve the problems of their relationship in some way or another and decided that getting engaged was the best solution. However, Jolanta's reencounter with Putnam, coupled with their passionate intimate encounter after Putnam recovered from the wounds of these events and woke from a long coma, led to her cheating on Teirgh. Although she later regretted it and abandoned Putnam without any explanation, it was the last straw, destroying the already fragile foundation of their relationship. The weight of Jolanta's infidelity, coupled with their ongoing emotional disconnect, proved too much to bear. Despite Teirgh's stoicism and pragmatism, even he couldn't ignore Jolanta's betrayal. The guilt and shame she felt only amplified the emotional distance between them.

Their attempts to salvage the relationship became increasingly strained. Conversations turned into arguments, and intimacy became a painful reminder of their fractured bond. Eventually, they both realized that continuing down this path only caused them more pain. With heavy hearts, they decided to call it quits. Other reasons that also added to the ending of the relationship were the cumulative effect of the arguments and breakups over the years. These constant ruptures had eroded their trust and intimacy, making it increasingly difficult to rebuild a foundation for a lasting relationship. Additionally, the physical intimacy part of the relationship played a role. Jolanta, after Putnam, subconsciously compared all her subsequent relationships to her experience with Putnam, making intimacy a constant reminder of what she felt was lacking.

After the end of their relationship, Teirgh leaved the Northern Kingdoms and the Nilfgaardian Empire region for good and returned to Bialsuf Alsarea to help Nasira and the other surviving Manticore Witchers to reconstruct the school, eventually

becoming the master and father figure of the famous Zhira of Zerrikania.

Kilanti / Haak Invasion of the Northern Kingdoms (September of 1249 - September of 1350)

> *"Jolanta? But... how? I... I thought..."*
> —Putnam after reuniting with Jolanta during the invasion

The delving into the Kilanti/ Haaki Invasion of 1350 is a complicated task that would take a lot of time due to its significant impact. However, to summarize, let's say that the Nordling and some of the Nilfgaardian forces (because it affected some provinces of the empire such as Cintra) during the entire year that the destructive invasion lasted had a challenging first six months. This was due to both poor strategies and a lack of unity, which allowed the Haaki forces to easily crush the invaded Nordlings with their two main hordes, namely the Black and the Red, and their sub-horde, the Golden, where the Great Khan of that time, Zeus, along with his advisor, Herna of Gemmeria, were leading and, to a lesser extent, also attacking.

It wouldn't be until the Ebbinger sorceress Brianna Vassermiller (part of the Ebbinger exiles who flew north after the vassal kingdom was attacked in the initial stages of the invasion), along with other sorceresses like the Kovirian Anika Marsir, convinced the Northern kings to stop blaming each other for not stopping the invaders, accept collaboration with the Nilfgaardian army from Cintra, and unite into a single army with what remained of their forces halfway through the year-long invasion, that things would change in their favor and the Northern Kingdoms would then free themselves from the yoke of being subjugated by an empire worse than the neighboring empire they had, the Haaki Empire, which had already expanded considerably into what the Nordlings called the Far East.

And where does Putnam and Jolanta fit into all of this? Well, before preparing what would lead to victory for the Northern Kingdoms and Cintra against the invaders, the Nordling and Cintrian forces, grouped under what would be known as the Northern Front, turned to diplomatic means. They were so exhausted and demoralized from those disastrous six months of repelling the Haakis that they preferred to first attempt to reach some agreement with the invaders before shedding more blood.

The coat of arms of the Northern Front, representing the union of the main forces against the invaders

The matter of the agreement was extensively debated in the various councils held between the kings and the mages (with individuals like Adalwulf, due to his mutant status, being prohibited from participating but acting as an intermediary thanks to Anika, in case the debates became too intense and seemed on the brink of turning physical). However, they made little progress because the kings were unwilling to submit to any empire, whether from the south or the east, and preferred to "die fighting," as they say.

Then, one day, before the upcoming council, while having breakfast with Brianna, Anika remembered Putnam and the stories he told about his time in the Far East, and she had an idea—why not use the witcher as a diplomat? If what Brianna had told her about the Haakis highly valuing those who had saved one of their own was true, and if the chronicles of Fabio about Putnam's feat in saving the then "prince," who was now the Great Khan, were accurate and not an exaggeration, perhaps Putnam could be the key to ending the conflict and reaching a fair

agreement that would prevent casualties on both sides.

Unfortunately, Anika's optimism was only partially justified as events would unfold differently than anticipated. Nonetheless, her contributions to the success in repelling the invaders were so significant that the kings of the Northern Kingdoms would eventually bestow upon her the title of "Lady of the North."

Although, they took their time, first because it was difficult to convince them, and second because the kings were not willing to let a "mutant" speak on their behalf, so they sent Anika and other mages to look for members who had participated in the expedition to the Far East, who were not, quoting them literally, "a fucking mutant." And so they did, because they had no other choice if they wanted to keep the Northern Front united. Unfortunately, they did not find anyone, as people like Istredd or Eberhatt had been dead for several years, literally on the other side of the world. So in the end, the kings had to yield and accept that Putnam would attempt the diplomatic approach.

Now, the most critical task remained—convincing Putnam. Adalwulf took care of the location, giving people like Anika and Brianna the exact whereabouts of Putnam. However, convincing him was another challenge altogether. Intuition told the Fox witcher that persuading Putnam, who had already rejected their offer to join the other witchers during the initial stages of the invasion, would not be easy. This was especially true given the significant task that the Northern Front had at hand for him. When Putnam was visited by Anika and Brianna, he initially refused again, not because he didn't want to help—of course, he wanted to—but because of his wife, Enya, since he didn't want to leave her alone for several months, let alone for the rest of her life if something happened to him while he went to help against the invasion.

It wasn't until Brianna and one of Adalwulf's sisters, Eishe of Vicovaro, employed their influence that they succeeded in persuading Putnam to cooperate with the Northern Front. He was coerced with the threat of having his house in Vicovaro seized by duke´s orders if he refused to go. Additionally, there was an imperial edict, signed by the Emperor himself, commanding his presence, along with a contingent of soldiers dispatched to his residence to ensure compliance.

As for Jolanta's role during the invasion, she initially maintained a relatively low profile, not actively participating in the conflict until the Haakis reached Novigrad and laid siege to the city. However, her circumstances underwent a significant change after the siege concluded with the defeat of the Redanian forces and the tragic loss of her own home, which was consumed by flames.

In response to these dire circumstances, Jolanta made the pivotal decision to join the Redanian army as a mercenary. Her motivation was driven by a desire to contribute her skills and combat prowess to the cause, aiming to assist in the defense of the Northern Realms against the Haaki invasion. Over time, she transitioned from her role as a mercenary to becoming an integral part of the Northern Front forces, dedicating herself to the larger battle against the Haakis.

Notably, Anika and Brianna, aware of Jolanta's prior relationship with Putnam and seeking to enlist his diplomatic assistance, made efforts to persuade her to accompany them on their mission to bring Putnam into the fold. They hoped that her connection to Putnam would prove valuable in convincing him to participate in their diplomatic efforts, given that Anika had heard about Jolanta through Putnam shortly before the events of 1288.

However, Jolanta declined their invitation, offering as her rationale the belief that her involvement would likely exacerbate the already delicate situation surrounding the Griffin's cooperation. She argued that her presence might hinder rather than help the cause, and she preferred to remain in a more discreet and anonymous role, contributing to the war effort in whatever capacity she could.

This often involved participating in covert infiltration missions with the goal of assassinating high-value Haaki military targets, including the generals leading the Black Horde and the Red Horde.

And now, questions arise: Did Jolanta and Putnam reunite after so many years? The answer is both yes and no, as their situation is rather complex. We will delve into their story later.

After bringing Putnam and explaining his mission, the plan unfolded with the initial step of sending an emissary. This emissary's primary objective was to demand a cessation of hostilities for the purpose of initiating negotiations. The Great Khan surprisingly accepted this proposition, initially believing it to be a precursor to a formal surrender and the subsequent establishment of terms.

Following this, Putnam was dispatched along with Adalwulf and Eishe for added protection. What transpired next appeared, at first glance, to be an amicable encounter between Putnam and the Great Khan Zeus. Their meeting had the air of a reunion between old friends who hadn't crossed paths in a considerable amount of time. However, as the conversation progressed, the atmosphere gradually shifted from conviviality to tension.

Putnam began to introduce critical issues into the discussion, including the proposal of a just and equitable agreement that would serve the interests of both sides. He also suggested that the Haakis should withdraw to their eastern origins, thereby leaving the Northern Realms in a state of peace. This transformation of the conversation turned what had initially seemed like a friendly chat into a confrontation.

In an unexpected twist, the Great Khan rejected these conditions vehemently and resorted to threatening Putnam, Adalwulf, and Eishe. Faced with this dire situation, they had no alternative but to make a swift escape before they could be dispatched by Zeus's personal guards.

Tragically, this endeavor to secure peace concluded in disaster and it left the Northern Front in a more precarious situation, struggling to fend off the invaders due to the considerable material losses they had sustained and the defeats they had experienced earlier in the conflict.

After the failure to attempt to achieve peace through diplomatic means, Putnam was allowed to return to Vicovaro, but he refused. Seeing the dire situation of the Northern Front, the witcher decided to help in any way he could. Not only did he feel indebted for the failed peace attempt, but he also felt it was his duty, despite the fears he had that Enya might end up alone. New fears arose after witnessing the destruction caused by the Haakis, and the mere thought of them reaching Vicovaro and laying it to waste sent shivers down his spine. That's why he felt he had to stay with the Northern Front and prevent the invasion from advancing further south.

Subsequent to the initial six months of only losses for the Northern Front, a fluctuating series of minor defeats and victories unfolded. These triumphs played a pivotal role in elevating the soldiers' morale and refining their organizational capabilities. Gradually, they adapted to the enemy's tactics, though they remained in a precarious position. Nonetheless, the fact that they managed to maintain their defensive stance without incurring significant losses marked a notable accomplishment.

It would be in this period of six months, where a surprised to see her alive Putnam, and Jolanta, would resume contact, although very sporadically due to the situation, but realizing, that deep down, both still felt something for each other.

A critical element contributing to these victories was the intervention of pirates hailing from the Skellige Islands. These seafarers thwarted the Haakis' attempts to take to the open waters for their conquest endeavors. Consequently, the Haakis found themselves increasingly confined to land, providing an opportunity for the Northern Front to launch surprise attacks utilizing the region's intricate network of navigable rivers with the pirates' help. This strategy turned the tables on the Haakis, subjecting them to unexpected assaults and further complicating their situation.

What eventually would lead to, once the troops' morale was at its peak, was an idea conceived by Adalwulf, and which would ultimately grant them victory. It was a risky plan – luring the Haaki forces to a single point and defeating them there. They faced danger, yes, and they didn't have the advantage, not only in numbers but also in equipment. However, it could work if the terrain was right, and there was no better place for it than the mountainous region of Mahakam. To execute this plan, they had to convince the dwarves, but it posed no problem as they too had been affected by what they called the "easterners" and wanted to give them what they deserved. The dwarves joined the Northern Front, giving rise to the Second Mahakam Volunteer Army as part of the forces. This move proved crucial in not only replenishing their losses in terms of manpower but also equipment, as the dwarves made all their resources available to the united Nordling and Cintrian armies along with the exiles of the other territories under Nilfgaardian banner that were attacked.

This set the stage for what would later be known in history as the Battle of Mahakam, which ended with a Nordling victory and the expulsion of the Haakis from the Northern Realms after a year of invasion.

It's worth noting that the dwarves' contribution to the expulsion of the Haakis was so significant that it left a lasting impact on Nordling history. This finally (along with the rebellions that Jolanta helped in the past) put an end to years of discrimination against dwarves, elevating them from second-class citizens to full-fledged citizens alongside humans. This represented a significant advancement in the Nordling mindset. This shift in attitudes would prove pivotal for subsequent events, such as the colonization of the Silk Islands and the Western Continent by the Nordlings, in which the dwarves played a crucial role.

Returning to the final battle against the Haakis in Mahakam, this significant confrontation occurred, to be precise, in mid-September. By this time, the Northern Front, as previously mentioned, had bolstered its strength significantly compared to the earlier part of the year. They were determined to take the daring gamble of luring all the Haaki troops to the region to eliminate them once and for all. Although the risks had been minimized thanks to the strategically chosen terrain and the invaluable assistance of the dwarves, there was still an underlying sense of danger. The battle was grueling but undoubtedly worthy of being retold by bards in the years to come. In this case, it evoked the saying from Toussaint: "a battle of Geralt against Golyat." However, in this instance, Geralt was battling with half his strength, having only partially recovered from his injuries, but he was better prepared for the next round of combat.

From this battle, many heroes emerged, including the one who conceived the audacious plan to lure the Haakis there, Adalwulf, along with Anika (accompanied by the other mages, like Brianna for example), and unexpected individuals like Roth, Putnam, and Cervin. Among these heroic figures, Anika and the mages distinguished themselves by accomplishing a feat that might even rival the achievements of the heroes of Sodden, both those who had perished and those who survived later on. This remarkable feat involved the partial control of an ifrit, a resource that Anika had obtained through a dwarf merchant who had acquired the genie before the invasion. This control of the Ifrit played a pivotal role in weakening the invading Haaki troops, contributing significantly to their ultimate defeat.

Explaining the battle in detail would be too extensive, so it's best to summarize it as much as possible. The first part of it involved offering the Haakis a bait, making them believe that Mahakam was empty and ripe for plunder, much like luring a mouse into a trap with a piece of cheese. They let the Haakis become overconfident while positioning themselves in one of the narrow passages within the vassal state of Temeria, waiting to catch them off guard when they eventually passed through. This strategy prevented the Haakis from maneuvering in open terrain, which was a significant advantage for them due to the plains and hills in their homeland. Interestingly, although it was later referred to as the Battle of Mahakam, it was not because it occurred in the dwarf state but because it took place in the pass of the same name.

In the second phase, as you can imagine, the plan involved releasing the Ifrit and attempting to control it so that it would exclusively target the Haaki troops. However, a significant challenge arose due to the narrow terrain, making this task exceedingly difficult, if not virtually impossible. This is where Roth's act of bravery or recklessness (depending on one's perspective) came into play.

The initial strategy was to initiate the battle, gradually compel the Haakis to retreat, and then, just as they were about to exit the pass, release the Ifrit to unleash devastation upon the enemy forces. However, the red-haired dwarf had different ideas. He expedited the process to prevent the battle from taking a turn for the worse, setting a rapid pace and demoralizing the Haakis in the process.

As the battle teetered on the brink of commencing, with the two armies facing each other, the dwarf, a member of the Second Mahakam Volunteer Army, boldly defied his superiors' orders and, without a moment's hesitation, threw himself into the fray. This indirectly compelled Putnam, who was on the front lines, to follow suit. Like the other Witchers who had joined the Northern Front, Putnam had been assigned to a specific army for enhancement. On this particular day, he found himself on the front line of attack/defense alongside the dwarves. Putnam joined Roth in the thick of the battle, attempting to save him, and they fought side by side.

This unexpected and daring action proved to be a powerful source of inspiration for the Northern Front troops as they witnessed that neither the dwarf, neither the witcher had perished, contrary to the initial fears of many, and they observed them not only defending themselves but also defeating several Haakis. This struck terror into the hearts of the enemy, who couldn't fathom why their adversaries remained unbroken.

This pivotal moment prompted the entire Northern Front armies to fully engage in the battle, advancing faster the original plan mentioned earlier. This allowed Anika and the other mages to release the ifrit and partially control it briefly, as they noticed the Haaki troops fleeing from the pass and the armies of the Northern Front retreating far enough to avoid significant harm. Some mages fell in the process of controlling the Ifrit, but their sacrifice was not in vain. The genie enabled the elimination of more troops from the various Haaki hordes and instilled more terror in the Haakis, causing the hordes to disperse into different smaller groups.

This paved the way for the third part of the plan, which, thanks to the motivation the soldiers received from Roth and Putnam, was executed flawlessly. The objective was to hunt down the various groups of Haaki troops that had scattered throughout Mahakam.

But obviously, life is no fairy tale, and Putnam, although he fought valiantly and managed to demoralize the Haakis troops alongside the dwarf, did not emerge unscathed like a hero from a play. Sooner rather than later, he succumbed in combat, impaled by several Haakis swords. Remarkably, he did not meet his demise, thanks to his slow pulse, a result of his witcher mutations. However, he

found himself in a dire state, akin to Coën in Brenna, but with the fortunate twist of surviving, in stark contrast to the fate suffered by the other member of the School of the Griffin. Putnam, no less, was rescued from the battlefield by Jolanta, who swiftly came to his aid upon spotting him in the distance among the fallen. In fact, Jolanta's prompt actions played a pivotal role in his survival. On the other hand, Roth also fell in battle, but his injuries were comparatively less severe than Putnam's, making him easier to attend to.

And thus, the future founders of the School of the Crane would come together once more. However, as previously mentioned on several occasions, life, in all its cruelty, would once again keep them apart, at least for another 31 years. Why, you might wonder? Well, the reason is quite straightforward. Even though Putnam would ultimately survive, the doctors and surgeons who tirelessly worked to save his life would make a grave error by mistakenly declaring him clinically dead. When they broke this devastating news to Jolanta, who was the sole witness present at that moment, anxiously hoping for a positive outcome, the shock was so profound that, together with the circumstances he had lived through up to that time, it plunged her into a deep depression. This, combined with the subsequent events in Putnam's life, would keep them separated until the fateful year of 1381 finally brought them back together. In fact, as a curious note, it was thanks to Adalwulf that Putnam was spared from being buried alive when the other witcher using his senses checked that he still had a pulse.

After that act, which many would describe as "foolishly heroic," Putnam, along with other individuals, was bestowed with titles for their bravery in defending the Northern Kingdoms from the invaders. Most of them received knighthood titles, specifically one created for that time, known as the "Knight of the North" (or "Lady of the North" in the cases of sorceresses like Anika Marsir). Many of them accepted the title with honor and underwent a proper ceremony. However, others, like Putnam, who was still recovering from his near-death experience, accepted it while lying on a stretcher, somewhat dazed from the medication administered, and simply went along with it.

However, Jolanta did not stay to eventually find out that Putnam was still alive, and that he would be presented with a knighthood, heavily affected by the news of Putnam´s supposed death, she leaved the united front, entering in a 10 years depression that affected her already mentioned relationship with Teirgh, eventually being one of the many factors that ended it.

Across Time and Loss (1360)

> *"Well, this is certainly... unexpected. Alive, I mean. You always did have a knack for defying expectations."*
> —Jolanta to Putnam during their reencounter

During those 10 years when Jolanta had to deal with severe depression due to Putnam's supposed death, coupled with the aforementioned deterioration of her complicated relationship with Teirgh, Jolanta began to ponder something. It had been many years since she had seen any of her School of the Cat companions (excluding, of course, those who had been reformed by Lambert and integrated into the School of the Lynx), and she began to wonder if any of them were still alive. Perhaps reuniting with them would give her a different perspective on things in general, not just on the progress she had made with Teirgh, which deep down, despite wanting it to be with him in a serious manner, she doubted would fully work out due to their very different natures.

So, after discussing it with Teirgh and agreeing that their marriage would take place at the end of that year, Jolanta embarked on a journey in search of her old companions, hoping it would also serve her to reflect on the next steps in her life, without expecting that life would once again take 180-degree turns, leaving her in a completely different place. And it would all start from the moment she,

following clues from her old companions, discovered their mysterious disappearances and decided to investigate. Witchers were more necessary than ever after the arrival of the Second Conjunction of the Spheres just two years earlier, and although she supposed that many could have died after the new influx of monsters, it raised an eyebrow that she hadn't found the body of any of them for a long time.

It wouldn't be until she decided to travel south that sooner rather than later, she would begin to find several of her old companions dead, not by any monster, but by murder. However, she didn't know if it was the same criminal or criminals. The deaths seemed so erratic that it baffled her, but at the same time intrigued her, due to the times she could deduce by examining the state of decomposition of the bodies. The only thing they all had in common was that they all seemed to be some kind of ritual sacrifice and were did it near the coast or other places near water bodies but nothing more.

So, not knowing exactly where to go, she turned to Thaikric, a contact from her time as a spy and assassin, who was still alive. And he recommended her to go both to the underworld of the capital of Nilfgaard and to accept meeting with a contact who was following the trail of an terrorist attack recently in Vicovaro, which perhaps could be somehow related to the deaths of her old companions from the School of the Cat. And Jolanta accepted, after all, she hadn't anything to lose, an a exchange of information, could be at worst, a lost of time, at best, a great advancement in her investigation.

However, this reunion, would hold more than a simple advancement for her. A reencounter with Putnam, who was with his friend, now the School of the Fox grandmaster Adalwulf of Aedirn. So, when they asked for her help, she agreed to join them after explaining what had happened, and they did same, the ritualistic nature of the murders, the escape of the mages from Darn Rowan, etc. it was clear, that despise the different nature of the attacks, that three of them were going after the same criminal or criminals. It's worth noting that the reunion between Putnam and her was somewhat awkward, not because they had issues between them, but because Jolanta found it hard to believe she was seeing him alive again, something she had believed to be impossible (even though it was clearly mistaken)

Once they were in the city, thanks to Jolanta, they managed to access the underworld, the less "shiny" part of the city. Having to go to a place of clandestine fights, visited by mages, supposing that perhaps, these mages, could be the ones who had escaped and were there, trying to earn money to be able to escape from the empire to distant lands.

At the site of the clandestine fights, at first, the three witchers could not get the information diplomatically, so they were forced to team up and fight for it, resulting in a somewhat costly victory, but finding out what they wanted. It was that these mages had been arrested not only for political reasons, for attempting against several important figures of the empire, but also for religious reasons, since they were worshiping a mysterious being known as Dagon, offering him blood sacrifices in the coast of Ebbing.

After compiling the gathered information, Adalwulf seized the opportunity to elucidate to Putnam and Jolanta who Dagon was and engage in speculation with them concerning the individuals responsible for the unfolding situation. These individuals were undoubtedly mages, but the pertinent questions loomed large: who were they, and why were they intent on harnessing Dagon's power? Adalwulf, did not believe that they worshiped him just because, after all, they were mages. They always thought of themselves first. Jolanta for her part, like many others, possessed only a cursory familiarity with Dagon, primarily through the recounting of Geralt of Rivia's epic confrontation with the entity. Putnam's knowledge, on the other hand, was restricted to the mere mention of Dagon

during his harrowing period of captivity and torment.

It was precisely due to these limited insights that, notwithstanding the apprehension that coursed through him, Putnam resolved not to relinquish his pursuit of the investigation. A growing suspicion gnawed at him, suggesting that the orchestrators of this enigma might have a connection to his own flesh and blood, perhaps even his elusive twin brother. With relentless determination, he continued to delve deeper into the mystery, and in time, his suspicions were validated – he had not erred in his intuition.

After the revelation, the group found themselves at a crossroads, a division driven primarily by Jolanta's talassophobia. They made their way towards Ebbing, each member pursuing their own path. Adalwulf, opting for a sea voyage, aimed to reach the vassal state of Nilfgaard faster. He chose this route over asking one of his sisters to conjure a portal, a decision influenced by the potential complications that could arise from the traces such magic left behind.

Once in Ebbing, Adalwulf settled into the wait for the others, utilizing the generous span of time to delve deeper into the investigation. His determination to track down the elusive mages burned brightly, fueled by a resolute sense of purpose. Each lead followed, each piece of the puzzle uncovered, brought him closer to the heart of the matter.

And by the time Putnam and Jolanta arrived, they had already made considerable progress, having located the mages, as well as proof of their plans. Indeed, it seemed that their leader, whose identity was unknown (but indeed, he turned out to be Putnam's twin brother, Mimit), intended, by means of different types of sacrifices, to "help" together with the sect that had armed the Vodynaoi in the reanimation of Dagon. All of this was with the objective of capturing the entity and taking that ancestral power for his benefit.

At first, Mimit had tried to do so by physically torturing Putnam mentally, leaving him in a catatonic state in which he could manipulate him at will. This was because Putnam, although not a mage, was a Source, and Mimit needed a catalyst not to die in the process due to power of Dagon and since that was a greater challenge than controlling an Ifrit. Now, he did not have Putnam, because he had considered him a failed experiment. He had taken advantage of all those years to investigate, convince, and deceive mages who turned out to be powerful Sources to achieve his goal with the least possible risk (because with Putnam in his day, he had risked more, since he was only one).

It would be during this journey to Ebbing on horseback that Putnam and Jolanta found themselves not only crossing land but also traversing the corridors of their shared history. The initial awkwardness of their reunion, after a decade of separation, and one of them supposedly being dead, gradually gave way to a familiar comfort as they fell into step with each other once more.

The passage of time had not extinguished the embers of their connection; instead, it seemed to have stoked the flames. There was a magnetic pull between them, an unspoken understanding that defied the years apart. Yet, despite the palpable undercurrent of longing, they both knew that circumstances had changed. Jolanta, committed to another, held a steadfast loyalty to her current relationship. It was a fact she gently acknowledged to Putnam, weaving it into their conversations with a sense of both tenderness and firmness.

This revelation was a bittersweet truth, a reminder that the currents of life had taken them in different directions. And so, they journeyed to Ebbing in a delicate dance of rekindled friendship and repressed desires. The unspoken acknowledgment of their shared history hung in the air, an invisible thread that bound them together, even as they trod carefully around its edges. But eventually, that taut thread would loosen again, bringing them together, if only for

a brief moment.

After the three of them had gathered and prepared themselves, they set a course to where the mages were, according to the information Adalwulf had obtained. The evidence that Adalwulf gathered led them to a concealed lair nestled deep within a network of ancient caves on the coast.

The journey through the caves was fraught with danger. The air grew heavy with the scent of damp earth and saltwater, and the sound of crashing waves echoed through the narrow passages. Putnam led the way, with Jolanta following closely, her movements precise and graceful, while Adalwulf provided strategic guidance, having dealt with situations like this before.

As they ventured deeper into the labyrinthine caverns, the atmosphere grew increasingly oppressive. The walls seemed to close in around them, and the distant echoes of their footsteps reverberated eerily. The mages had clearly gone to great lengths to conceal their lair. Finally, they reached the inner sanctum probably from vodynaoi or vran origin, a massive chamber with an altar at its center. Mimit stood there, his face obscured by a hood, surrounded by his loyal followers and some vodyanoi. The air was charged with ancient magic, crackling and humming with an unsettling power.

Putnam's heart pounded in his chest as he confronted the brother who had created so many of the nightmares that had haunted him for years. Mimit's eyes gleamed with a sinister intelligence, and a cruel smile played at the corners of his lips. He raised his hands, preparing to unleash a devastating spell, but Jolanta was faster.

With a swift, precise movement, she flung a dagger coated with a powerful poison at Mimit. The blade struck true, piercing Mimit's heart before he could complete his incantation. His eyes widened in shock, and he crumpled to the ground, life draining from his body. The mages around him screamed in agony as the poison spread, their spells unraveling.

The chamber descended into chaos. Spells ricocheted off the walls, lighting up the chamber in blinding flashes of light. Putnam, Jolanta and Adalwulf fought side by side, their movements synchronized in a deadly dance. In the midst of the chaos, Putnam's thoughts raced. He watched as his brother's life force ebbed away, and a mix of emotions surged within him. Relief washed over him, mingling with grief and a profound sense of closure. The source of so much pain and suffering was no more.

Jolanta's presence at his side was a steadfast anchor. Together, they pushed back against the onslaught of magic, their determination unwavering. With a final surge of energy, they overcame the remaining mages and vodynaois, leaving the chamber eerily silent in the aftermath.

Exhausted but victorious, the three of them stood amidst the fallen foes. The weight of the moment for Putnam and Jolanta hung heavy in the air, a culmination of years of struggle and sacrifice. Putnam turned to Jolanta, a mixture of gratitude and awe in his eyes. She had saved him, not just in this confrontation, but in a deeper sense, from some of the most terrible specters of his traumatic past that, even after so much time, having overcome so much on his own and having gained more strength, still haunted him like echoes of a bygone era.

However, Putnam's victory came at a cost. He was badly wounded during the battle, and as the adrenaline faded, the pain became overwhelming. They quickly made their way out of the caverns, back to the surface. Once they were safe, they realized that Putnam's injuries were severe, and he needed immediate medical attention, which became evident after the wounds caused him to fall into a coma.

So after that, Adalwulf contacted one of his sisters, and the three of them marched to Burov Mylne using a portal.

Visit to Burov Mylne

> *"Finally awake, Sleeping Beauty. Took you long enough."*
> —Jolanta when Putnam awoke from his coma

At Burov Mylne, Putnam remained in a coma for approximately two weeks. He was cared for by several people, among them Eishe and Arrah, Birrexi of Poviss, Jolanta, and Adalwulf himself. During those long days and nights, the atmosphere was heavy with worry and uncertainty. Jolanta rarely left his side, her presence a soothing balm to the chaos that raged within Putnam's battered body. Since they had reunited, he had intended to have a conversation with her about the complex tangle of emotions that had resurfaced between them. However, when the moment came, and he awoke, though not fully recovered, words seemed inadequate. Instead, Jolanta, in a moment of vulnerability and desire, conveyed her feelings through touch and caresses, igniting a passionate encounter that transcended the confines of speech.

Jolanta in Burov Mylne

In the hushed hours of that night, as the world outside Burov Mylne faded into obscurity, their union was an affirmation of longing and desire, a respite from the relentless turmoil of their lives. However, this passionate liaison bore unintended consequences. In the dawning light of the following day, Jolanta, overwhelmed by guilt and a stark realization of her actions, quietly departed without uttering a word. Putnam awoke to find her gone, a hollow ache in his chest, and the weight of unresolved emotions hanging over him.

As time passed, Putnam slowly mended, but the scars ran deeper than the physical wounds. He grappled with the aftermath of their passionate encounter, questioning the choices they had both made in that fragile moment. It was a bittersweet memory, a reminder of what he thought could never be.

The lonely decades (1360 - 1381)

After what happened in 1360, Jolanta and Putnam would remain separated for another 21 years. This was due to a multitude of reasons, with the main one being their work. The high demand for their services as witchers and the scarcity of new ones (since the new generations were still in training) kept them busy traveling from one place to another on paths that would never cross, trying to meet that demand as much as possible. Gradually, they tried to forget each other (something that proved impossible), believing that the red thread that bound their lives was parallel and not destined to cross, except when some mysterious force decided to force it. But both were very wrong, as two decades and one year later, they would finally be together, only separating almost at the end of their lives, after 120 years of marriage, when death claimed one of them before the other.

Jolanta joins the School of the Crane (1381)

> *"Heard whispers of a new witcher school. Didn't expect to find it run by you, of all people."*
> —Jolanta during her visit to Kaer Darh

On May 11, 1381, which happened to be Putnam's 126th birthday, Jolanta would reappear in both the fortress and the life of the now first Grandmaster of the School of the Crane. Neither of them had any inkling of what this reencounter

would bring, but it held the promise of positive changes, not just for them personally but also for the school itself. However, before delving into this, let's provide some context regarding Jolanta's situation.

Her tale is one of heartache and longing, rooted in the belief, as already said, that she had lost Putnam during the Haaki Invasion, an event that falsely pronounced him clinically deceased. A decade later, in 1360, as already mentioned, fate intervened, orchestrating a reunion that would eventually turn passionate between them. Yet, the torrent of emotions unleashed led Jolanta to depart silently the very next day. It was a painful choice, driven by the guilt she bore for having betrayed her partner from that time, a transgression she attributed to Putnam and the intensity of their rekindled connection.

Despite the turmoil, Jolanta persisted in her role as a witcher, unaware that she had unwittingly become the last living member of the School of the Cat. By this time, the remaining members who had resisted Lambert's reforms leading to the emergence of the School of the Lynx had all passed away, leaving only Jolanta as the last of them. While she clung to the hope of reuniting with a fellow member and resurrecting the school, for example, in Stygga once again, the cruel march of time slowly revealed her solitude and the bitter truth that she was the last member of the once School of the Cat, even without explicit confirmation.

The most poignant reminder of her isolation came one day when she received a letter from Lambert, sent from the Western Continent, inviting her to join the Lynxes. This offer weighed heavily on her, reminding her of the years that had passed, the overwhelming loneliness she felt, and the deep longing for her past life in Dyn Marv (so much so that she adopted the caravan's name as her surname, which would eventually be corrupted to Dinmarb due to bureaucratic issues). It may not have been the most comfortable place to live, but it had been her home, and the heart always aches for home, no matter how humble it may be.

And despite her reservations and her lingering talasophobia, which had not abated, Jolanta reluctantly accepted Lambert's offer. She sold her reconstructed house in Novigrad and, with a heavy heart, embarked on a ship headed for the Western Continent to join the Lynxes. Little did she know that life had other plans in store for her, as it would once again reunite her with Putnam, and this time, their reunion would be everlasting.

The steps towards the reunion between the two former lovers and future husband and wife would happen gradually. First, with Jolanta's journey across the Great Sea towards the New World. Second, during the journey, despite her aforementioned thalassophobia, Jolanta had to act as a witcher against sea monsters, thus foreshadowing her destiny as a co-founder of the School of the Crane. Third, through rumors that indirectly mentioned Putnam and talked about his new school. And fourth and last, through verifying these rumors herself, once the ship made its usual technical stop in Hawaiki, and she decided to stay, thinking to satisfy her curiosity and then continue her journey to the Western Continent, unaware that, after that harmless act to satisfy her curiosity, the island would become her new home for many years. She arrived at the still unnamed fortress to inquire about these new witchers, as already mentioned, on Putnam's 126th birthday, more precisely at nightfall. And due to the situation they were going through in the fortress with Stefan and his illness, as if it were a light in the darkness.

In fact, Putnam was the one who received her, as when she arrived it was late at night, and he was the only one still awake, having spent entire nights taking care of Stefan. Putnam looked very tired. The reception was not uncomfortable but rather tense, after so many years. Putting it in poetic terms, *"the sea had brought her to his shore,"* and initially, Putnam didn't quite know how to react, as things like the conversation they never had 21 years ago when she left the next day weighed between them. Still, he treated her with the courtesy one extends to a

guest, explained everything about the fortress that very night, assigned her a room (a room which, as a curiosity, in the future would be the room of one of his adopted sons, Ezeld), and the next day, about the concept of the school, in addition to introducing her to the people who were part of it at that time. Little did they both know that what would initially seem like staying for a few days would end up becoming being together again, shaping and leading the school together for 119 years, getting married, and overcoming the so-called *"bone weddings"* .

With their return to being together, thanks, curiously, to Stefan and his illness, they demonstrated to each other, without uttering a word, just how much they loved each other by staying together again in the bad, as on many other occasions, such as in 1281 or 1360. Jolanta, noticing Putnam's tiredness (and according to her, although she didn't believe it herself, as a favor for letting him stay in the fortress for a few days), would join the former Golden Griffin in his sleepless nights, taking care of the one who went from being the "nestling" of the (ex) Griffin to being both of theirs. Surprisingly, Putnam, as stubborn and *"I don't need anyone's help"* as he was, accepted. Who knows if it was because he missed her company, felt the weight of age (at least mentally), was very tired, or simply because he had changed; the fact is that he accepted. Not without always watching over her well-being and ensuring she didn't overexert herself, which, little by little, began to rekindle the embers of that lost love, turning them back into a bonfire that would burn strongly when the key moment finally arrived after several days. This moment being nothing more and nothing less than Jolanta's risky (and without consulting Putnam, as well as lying to the rest of the staff) decision to make Stefan go through the Trial of the Grasses when she noticed that the disease was about to take him to his death. This would ultimately save the boy, but not without leaving him with green feline eyes due to the illness, similar to Coën from the School of the Griffin in his day after suffering from smallpox.

This pivotal moment, in fact, occurred more specifically when Putnam left the fortress to consult with the local doctors, hoping to gain insights into the various endemic diseases of the islands and some method to help Stefan. In his absence, Jolanta took advantage to perform that risky act, as Putnam would be absent for six days (three going, and three returning), with only one day's difference from when the changes produced by the Trial of the Grasses would generaly take place (that is, one week).

And you can imagine the rest. When Putnam returned to the fortress (unfortunately without any progress) and learned of what Jolanta had done without his permission, his face flushed with contained anger. He sought out the still Cat witcheress, and without a word, silently praying to Freyja for Stefan to survive the day he had still left, he stared at Jolanta with a look that could have melted steel. But she, despite it all, stood her ground (though deep down, she had a strange mix of fear, astonishment, and excitement), aware that she had crossed a dangerous line. What followed was the biggest scolding Jolanta had ever received in her life. Putnam was so furious that, in Roth's exact words, who went to see what was happening, *"it seemed like he had been possessed by a demon and had turned into a madman."* Few kind words came out of his mouth, and he shouted so much that he even became hoarse. *"How dare she," "she was just a guest," "if Stefan were to die, she would never see his face again in her life, and he would banned her forever from entering the fortress"* were among the many things Putnam said to her. These were the milder ones; there's no need to delve into the rest.

It wouldn't be until Stefan stopped waking up and screaming, with Putnam confirming he was still alive and had likely survived that part of the Trial of the Grasses, that the witcher's anger slowly gave way to the unresolved tension between him and Jolanta. This tension transformed into a gaze filled with pent-up emotions. They found themselves at a point of no return, where passion and fury intertwined in a dangerous dance. The tension between them reached its

peak on the same night. In the reflection of the flames illuminating the dining room, during a seemingly troubled and silent dinner that appeared to end badly with another outburst from Putnam, their gazes sparked with pent-up emotions, and their breaths synchronized slowly.

It was a casual brush, barely noticeable, when they both reached for the salt to season their food, and it broke the ice. Their hands met by accident as they both reached for the salt shaker. A shiver ran down their spines, and in that moment, the anger and frustration on Putnam's part, and to some extent, the guilt that Jolanta ultimately felt for not having informed Putnam of her intentions with Stefan, gave way to something more intense.

Without uttering a word, Putnam rose from his seat and gently pulled Jolanta closer to him, and their lips met in a passionate yet silent kiss. It was a kiss that spoke of years of complicity, repressed love, and a connection they had never been able to deny completely.

Time seemed to stand still as they lost themselves in that kiss, in the warmth of their bodies drawing closer. It was a moment of catharsis, where they released the built-up tension. They realized that, despite everything, they still felt something for each other, something that had survived time and distance.

Finally, they parted, their gazes now filled with a new complicity. Without the need for words, they had found a way to heal the wounds of the past, from Putnam's 1281 abandonment, through the painful breakup in Vinland, ending with Jolanta's aforementioned abandonment of Putnam in 1360, and moved forward together into an uncertain future. The passion they had shared in that instant reminded them that, although the road would be complicated, they were willing to face it together, united by something stronger than pride or anger: the love they had never stopped feeling for each other.

With that being said, shortly after Stefan successfully completed the Trial of the Grasses, Jolanta made the heartfelt choice to remain by Putnam's side, opting not to join Lambert and the other Lynxes. Her decision was more than well-received by Putnam and the others, including Stefan. In a meaningful gesture, Putnam presented her with a Crane medallion and also bestowed upon her the grandmaster's mantle that she would share with him, signifying their shared commitment as equals on this journey and true partners in every sense. And with this, the School of the Crane was de facto born.

The First Ones (1381 - 1383 / 1383 - 1400)

> *"This is our chance, Putnam. To forge a new path for witchers, one free from the mistakes of the past."*
> —Jolanta during the first years of the School of the Crane

After Jolanta joined the school and became a grandmaster, they began to discuss, refine, implement, change, and polish ideas that she and Putnam had. On some occasions, both of them would yield to the other's idea, but often, they would reach a middle ground or even come up with a new and better idea after extensive debate. Furthermore, their wedding took place in the summer of that same year. It was an intimate ceremony, held on the beach just ten minutes away from the fortress, following a civil rite. Charz, Jabolet, and Stefan acted as witnesses, with Roth officiating the ceremony.

As a curiosity, once the syncretic culture of Fabiola and the Silk Islands further developed, Putnam and Jolanta eventually adopted the double surname that became common among humans in this part of the world. They became Putnam Pitch Dinmarb and Jolanta Dinmarb Pitch respectively (something that, consequently, their adopted children would also inherit).

Only after the wedding would they begin the search for more first students, who,

like Stefan, as mentioned before, would also become their adopted children. The next after Stefan would be Math, a two-year-old Nordling, along with a batch of more children after visiting the Elmia Orphanage. Most of these children had lost their parents due to monsters, either on their way to the islands, arriving as shipwrecks, or on the islands themselves. So, it made sense to start there.

In due course, Putnam and Jolanta brokered an accord with the colonial government. It stipulated that children who remained unadopted after a certain period would find refuge within the fortress. This landmark agreement would serve as the precursor to a series of subsequent pacts, encompassing various domains. These included safeguards to shield the Cranes from things like the pogroms suffered by other schools in the past, granting them a degree of legal protection and, if necessary, assistance in defense against potential aggressors (a guarantee never absolute, yet an achievement in its own right).

Jolanta in her first years as grandmaster

Following Stefan and Math, Orser and Ucalt would be welcomed. Aged 5 and 3 respectively, Orser hailed from Nordling heritage, while Ucalt was of Silk Islander origin. Their rescue by Putnam and Jolanta unfolded during a voyage through the islands in search of potential students. They had been kidnapped by a pirate ship that had plundered their village along with other children, intending to *"gift"* them to certain nobles with a disturbing interest in children, in exchange for a large sum of money.

After Orser and Ucalt, at some point in 1382, Ezeld, a one-year-old of Nordling origin, would join the family next. Putnam and Jolanta saved him from being eaten by an orange dragon that had taken his parents, all while they were on their way to investigate rumored ghostly appearances at the mysterious Moai statues of Hawaiki on orders from the vice-governor. This was in exchange for future Crane adepts from local orphans, this time not only from the Elmia Orphanage as they had previously agreed, but also from the private orphanage in the port city of Putnam.

After Stefan, Math, Orser, Ucalt, and Ezeld, the following members would join the family between the remaining of 1382 and 1383:

Acol, 2 years old, of mixed origins, the child of a noble Nordling from New Verden and a native of The Plains, given to Putnam and Jolanta as a reward (instead of the money he promised them) for having freed him from the specter of his wife, which would later be classified as a chocani. Deeran, of Nordling origin and two years old, was saved by Putnam and Jolanta while they were on a contract to deal with an abere and Enu, also of Nordling origin and two years old, was saved by Jolanta from his abusive family, similar to how Pardus of Korath did with hers, meaning, by killing them in the process.

And after this three, Uzoma, of three years old, was the son of a Nordling settler who had become a fisherman and was killed by an adaro. Putnam was, in fact, "hired" by the then-child to find his father, discovering his body, dispatching the monster, and then taking the child with him since he had no other family and couldn't leave him alone. Idowu, of mixed origins, was the son of two merchants: a father who was half Zangvebarian and half Ofieri, and a mother who was half Melukkan and half Nilfgaardian. They were en route to the Zangvebarian Colonies, as Putnam was able to ascertain through his investigation when he found him. Idowu was just six months old at the time, the sole survivor of a shipwreck after their vessel was attacked by a lusca, and finally, Halsey, better known as Bo, was

the only girl of that generation (although more would be trained and mutated later, all thanks to advances like those of Nasira). She was the youngest of all the siblings, of unknown origin but likely Tuyotukian, and was just 1 month old. When Putnam found her during his and Jolanta's passage through the Nilfgaardian Overseas Provinces, she was the sole survivor of a massacre carried out by a group of bandits on a slave plantation. Initially, Putnam had considered returning her to the owner of the slave plantation, but the then-baby grew so attached to him that he ultimately decided to keep her.

Along with the children who came with Math, they would amount to a total of about 40. Out of these, only around 10 would survive the Trial of the Grasses. These survivors would also endure the rest of the trials and, as mentioned before, graduate to become the First Ones or the first generation of Cranes.

As time passed, as also previously mentioned, they would become the adopted children of Putnam and Jolanta. The couple grew just as fond of them as they had with Stefan back in the day, eventually legally adopting them. This meant they were raised and trained not only as comrades but practically as biological siblings, even though they were not.

In fact, one could say that the fortress at that time transformed into the home of a large family, with individuals like Roth, who became akin to an uncle figure for the first Cranes. This pattern would repeat in the subsequent generations of Cranes, though perhaps not quite as intensely.

Reunion with Adalwulf and signing of the Witcher Reformation Act (1390)

> *"Let's hear what this act entails before we jump on board. We built the Crane on our own terms, and I'm not about to compromise our values easily."*
> —Jolanta to Putnam during Adalwulf´s visit to Kaer Darh

After 10 years of training the first Cranes, mostly peaceful with only occasional minor scares, mainly from Ezeld, the year 1390 arrived with a significant event, not only for the Cranes but for the entire witcher guild in general. This event was none other than the visits of Adalwulf of Aedirn, a long-time friend of Putnam, to the different witcher schools on both sides of the world, in order for them to sign the document known as the Witcher's Reformation Act. This document aimed not to restore the old Order but at least to bring more unity to the guild and thus prevent mistakes like those of the extinct Order of Witchers, and the various schools that succeeded the order, which nearly led to their disappearance in the past.

Additionally, it sought to prevent events such as the Cats' betrayal of the Wolves or what the Foxes themselves suffered at the hands of the School of the Rat. Adalwulf began with the schools present on the Old Continent, namely Griffin, Viper, Manticore, and Gyrfalcon. By that same year, he already had his sights set on having those on the Western Continent also sign the act. He started first with the Cranes on the Silk Islands, and concluded with the Lynxes on the Western Continent. Later, he added the School of the Bat once it was founded. However, he couldn't include the School of the Dragon or the School of the Basan in the treaty due to their remote locations in the Far East of the Old Continent.

It's worth mentioning that Adalwulf and Putnam, after Putnam moved and started the School of the Crane, didn't lose contact, but it simply became more sporadic over time. Initially, it was through letters (which took three months to arrive), and later through letters and also through a megascope once amplifiers were installed in the fortress to establish a connection with the Old Continent. However, this too was somewhat sporadic for a simple reason: it depended heavily on the weather. When clouds from the Mad Sea extended beyond that region of the ocean, the connection became too unstable for proper communication.

As an interesting fact, it seemed that the two friends were quite in sync. Despite the distance, and even though Adalwulf had already planned the visit, it was Putnam who came first and encouraged him to come to Kaer Darh in one of the many letters that they usually wrote to each other. They had briefly discussed the act during their megascope meetings, and after much consideration, Putnam felt that it wasn't a bad idea for the Cranes to join. However, he wanted to discuss it in person and perhaps propose some reforms.

It was thanks to Adalwulf's act, among other factors, such as his admiration for figures like Geralt of Rivia and Raven, to name two examples, that Putnam would be inspired to create what would be known as the Codex of the White-Haired, with the help of Jolanta, of course, who provided a necessary touch of pragmatism and realism to counterbalance Putnam's idealism reflected in the initial version. This codex would ultimately serve as a moral guide for the witchers in the Silk Islands and the Western Continent at first (once Putnam managed to get in touch with Lambert and convinced him, albeit reluctantly), aiming to prevent things like the corruption of the Cats in the past. It would later expand and also be used by the witchers of the Old Continent after being implemented in Adalwulf's act following his visit to the fortress along with his sisters and two more Fox companions.

Adalwulf received the letter warmly, agreeing to meet his friend in person. Together with Ukok, Natka, and the mages Eishe of Vicovaro and Arrah of Verden, they embarked on a journey aboard a ship of The Company to the Silk Islands. Their visit lasted approximately two months, during which the two friends reconnected on a personal level. They engaged in lengthy, almost philosophical discussions about the document, interspersed with various activities such as observing the students' training and fishing. Following Adalwulf's stay at Kaer Darh, Putnam's codex was integrated into the act. Originally designed for his own school and later adopted by the Lynxes after Jolanta suggested to Putnam that he should try to convince Lambert to adopted it, it found a place among the broader witcher community, thanks to Fox. This act marked a significant step towards unity and moral clarity within the guild.

However, it's important to note that the Griffins stood as an exception. Despite their endorsement of Adalwulf's act, they retained their own distinct code. They found the Codex's perceived "excessive pragmatism" to be at odds with their own values and traditions, leading them to preserve their unique way of operating within the guild.

Training the next five generations of Crane School witchers (1400 - 1500)

> *"The world needs them now more than ever. Let's hope they're up to the challenge."*
> —Jolanta after the graduation of the first members of the School of the Crane

Shortly after Adalwulf's visit in 1390, more precisely one month later, the first graduation of the school would take place, which would be Stefan's, nicknamed Stefan "The Crane" by his brothers, because he was the first student of the school. He would emerge at the age of 18 into the world as the first witcher from the School of the Crane. On the other hand, his brothers wouldn't finish their training (due to the age difference with Stefan) until the year 1400. It's in this year that the first generation of Crane Witchers, as such, would emerge into the world (excluding Stefan, as he was an exceptional case due to his circumstances), joining their older brother in the task of protecting the skies and seas of the world.

After that, Putnam and Jolanta continued to train five more generations of Cranes, eventually with the help of their adopted children as teachers in various fields, as well as previous generations of Cranes who grew up, graduated, and gained experience. They retired from being grandmasters and teaching in 1500,

moving to live a relatively peaceful life on the outskirts of the capital of Fabiola, Cherdian, in a house given to Putnam by the vice-governor as a gift during one of the anniversaries of the foundation of Fabiola, since he was the only member still alive from the expedition that discovered the islands and the Western Continent. Putnam focused mainly on painting, with Jolanta as his muse, occasionally taking on contracts to stay sharp, so to speak. Jolanta did the same regarding contracts, but also enjoyed the pleasures of life with her husband. They passed the mantle of grandmaster to Ucalt, who would remain in the position until 1555.

Unfortunately, Roth would not accompany them, as Putnam would retire the dwarf from his work, passing on the mantle of the School of the Crane's blacksmith to his apprentices, and that of the cook to a new worker around 1450, as he believed that, with all he had done, he had already repaid his life debt to him. Thus granting him a more than well-deserved retirement. Roth would pass away shortly after in 1455, at the age of 200. The entire School of the Crane would attend his funeral and mourn his loss.

During this time, many things happened. One of the most notable, as well as tragic due to the large number of victims it claimed, occurred in the year 1410. It was the attack on the main population centers of Fabiola and the Silk Islands by the Higher Vampire tribe known as Ammurun, along with a wide variety of vampires from both classifications. They felt they were losing control over what they considered their "territories" and sought to intimidate and subjugate humans to their will. Some of these vampires were even unknown to humanity until that date. However, in the end, humans managed to repel them. Due to this event reaching the islands, it led the School of the Crane to get involved. One of its members, Math, lost an arm during this time and had to use a prosthetic. This experience later motivated him to establish the School of the Bat in an attempt to find a way to deal with them and prevent something like this from happening again.

As an interesting side note, Putnam also came close to death during this event when he attempted to face what would later be known as a talamaur on his own. However, with the combined efforts of Math, Ezeld, and Jolanta, they managed to save his life at the last moment.

Others worth mentioning, both for their joyousness and their equal interest, included Bo's pairing and subsequent marriage to a diplomat from the Tuyotuki Islands. This would later lead her to establish another school branching off from the Cranes, the School of the Basan, on the other side of the world. However, this school was not solely focused on the Tuyotuki, unlike a certain offshoot School of the Manticore.

There was also the confrontation of Putnam and Jolanta against one of Dagon's sons, the dilemma both Crane parents had to deal with regarding the erumía, the usual pirate attacks to the islands from time to time, the problem with the selamodir, which involved the participation of many members of the school (though not all), and the deception of the tabibal.

Retirement, death and legacy (1500 - 1515)

> *"We must honor her memory, the woman who stood by my side, who helped shape the Cranes."*
> —Putnam during Jolanta's funeral

After retiring and moving to Cherdian, as previously mentioned, Putnam and Jolanta enjoyed a well-deserved retirement where they hardly had to worry about anything other than enjoying themselves and civilian life, so to speak. Putnam had saved a portion of the money he had used for the construction of the fortress for an 'emergency,' which turned out to be his retirement, as fortunately nothing

more serious had happened. This money served them for a long while until Putnam resumed his hobby of drawing and painting under better conditions. Before long, he made a name for himself in Fabiola's art scene (although always avoiding parties and other extravagances of the art world) under the alias Joaquim Sorala. He stood out for his luminist work, especially his portraits (most of which were of Jolanta), and those paintings that depicted the coastal life of Fabiola, but particularly that of Cherdian.

Putnam and Jolanta's life as retirees was tranquil and enjoyable in more than one sense, something that the majority of their peers could only have dreamed of. It seemed as if life, after so many tribulations, had gradually granted them moments of respite, reducing its intensity until finally reaching that state, allowing them to age together in peace. Although, in reality, aging, or at least in appearance, wasn't something they did much of. They retained the look they had back in the 1490s, Jolanta due to the formula used by the School of the Cat to mutate women, which was highly experimental, and due to certain biological differences, to put it scientifically, between female and male Homo Venator (considering the subspecies they both were). Putnam, on the other hand, retained his appearance thanks to what's known as Manisa's Genesis. Both of them ended up with an appearance in their late thirties or early forties, more or less.

As time continued to march forward, the year 1510 marked a profound and somber moment in Putnam's life as Jolanta passed away peacefully in her own bed. The circumstances surrounding her passing remained shrouded in mystery. Was it a sudden departure or possibly a consequence of the experimental formula used by the School of the Cat? These questions would forever remain unanswered. One fateful evening, they went to sleep together as they had done for 120 years, but Jolanta did not awaken.

In the wake of Jolanta's death, Putnam took it upon himself to tenderly prepare her body for its final journey. He embarked on a solemn journey to Kaer Darh, where he delivered the heartbreaking news of Jolanta's passing to the School of the Crane, and together with the children they had lovingly embraced as their own, they orchestrated a fitting funeral to honor her memory. Jolanta, in her passing, became the first known female witcher to peacefully pass away in her own bed, mirroring the distinction held by the Griffin male witcher, Ryvlyn of Sanzode.

Putnam, though profoundly affected by the loss of his beloved Jolanta, understood that 120 years of marriage and companionship couldn't be easily forgotten. He carried her memory with him every day and knew that he would miss her deeply until his own time came. Yet, Putnam chose a path of acceptance and resilience, a lesson he had learned through the pains of loss before. He recognized that holding onto the past like a burning ember could consume one's soul. In this challenging moment, he drew strength from the wisdom of letting go and moving forward.

Moreover, he was well aware that Jolanta, in her fiercely independent spirit, would have scorned the notion of him dwelling endlessly in sorrow. Instead, he honored her memory by carrying on with the courage and determination that had defined their long and remarkable journey together. In the face of this profound loss, Putnam found solace in the knowledge that he had done right by Jolanta, allowing her to rest peacefully while he continued to embrace life's uncertainties with the same unwavering spirit that had characterized their enduring love.

As the years flowed on, the weight of solitude settled upon Putnam's shoulders. Returning to his home in Cherdian after the funeral, he would spend the next 45 years enveloped in a quiet world of his own making. With brushes in hand, he poured his heart into his paintings, each stroke a reflection of the emotions that dwelled within him. The occasional monster contract served as a tether to the life he once led, a reminder of the world beyond his canvas.

Yet, in the sacred space he called home, the echo of memories with Jolanta lingered. He moved through the rooms, retracing steps once taken together, cherishing the ghostly traces of her presence. The laughter, the shared dreams, the quiet moments of understanding—all now existed in the hallowed halls of memory.

His solitude was interrupted, however, by the steady stream of visits from his children. Both those he had legally adopted and the members of the School of the Crane from other generations, they came with concern etched upon their faces. They sought to bridge the gap of his isolation, offering their company and care, ensuring he was not alone in his grief.

In a turn of purpose, Putnam took on a new role as an author, weaving Jolanta's diaries into a narrative to further share her extraordinary story with the world. He chose to remain behind the scenes, allowing another writer to stand in the spotlight. He had no desire to field questions about the book or about Jolanta herself. The tale was hers to tell, and he was content to be the silent hand that brought it to light.

Through the passage of time, Putnam found a way to carry the weight of loss. He navigated the ebb and flow of grief, understanding that some days would be brighter, while others dipped into shadow. Age took its toll, weariness settling into his bones, and there were moments when the facade of strength became too heavy to bear in front of others.

Yet, in those private moments, he sought solace in the knowledge that he had honored Jolanta's memory. Her spirit lived on in the strokes of his paintings, in the pages of her diaries turned book, and in the hearts of those who had come to know her through his words. In the sanctuary of his home, he held onto the love they had shared, finding comfort in the enduring legacy of their extraordinary journey together.

Despite Ezeld's persistent attempts to play matchmaker, particularly with sorceresses, Putnam staunchly declined every proposition. In the witcher's own words, "I'd rather be alone than with some wench who doesn't even come close to measuring up to your mother" Putnam's unwavering devotion to Jolanta and the profound impact she had on his life were insurmountable barriers to any potential romantic entanglements. He held her memory in such high regard that he couldn't fathom replacing her with anyone else. The love they shared was a flame that continued to burn brightly in his heart, casting a long shadow over any attempts to kindle a new connection.

Unbeknownst to Putnam, his book would go on to wield significant influence among the priests of Fabiola's Creole religion, known as Santism—a blend that occurred over time due to the interaction of Fabiola with the Zangvebarian colonies, incorporating elements of Melitele/Freyja, Toussaint Saints, and Zangvebarian Shamanism. Shortly after Jolanta's passing, and following the release of Putnam's book, owing to her notable deeds spanning both the distant past and recent history, the priests of Santism canonized her as Saint Jolanta, bearing the title "Defender of the Innocent and Purifier of Corruption."

Jolanta's heroic role in dismantling a vile pedophilia network associated with the Church of the Eternal Fire in 1288 became a widely embraced and resonant narrative. Her actions struck a chord with the faithful of Santism, serving as a symbol of moral fortitude and unwavering dedication to justice. As a result, her veneration and adoration began to take root, with the cult of Saint Jolanta steadily gaining followers and recognition. This process of canonization and reverence commenced around the year 1515, solidifying her place as a revered figure within the Santism faith.

Personality

> *"Rulers only serve themselves, until they prove otherwise."*
> —Jolanta

Jolanta was a fiercely independent woman from the start. With a glib tongue, a quick and sharp wit and a curious mind, she was a balanced mix between pragmatic and romantic, though the latter would be eroded greatly as the years in her life progressed. She had little to no respect for whatever authority she deemed unfit to actually rule, an idea which was, throughout her years, more and more enforced the more she met with politicians and nobility. She had a soft spot for the downtrodden and those whom society would consider vermin, be they non-human or simply people of less means, and this tenderness in her heart would drive her actions from her very beginning as a witcheress to the end of her life.

Jolanta was not above using manipulation, violence and deceit whenever it would best suit her goals; after all, she'd been brought up as a Cat, and honour was not as important to them as it was to other witchers, such as the Wolves of Kaer Morhen or the Griffons up at Kaer Seren. She'd been taught to survive first, and let the rest come later. Though her heart was soft for those unable to defend themselves, her enemies and the names in her contracts would know nothing but steel and ice. A cool head on her shoulders, she was known for seeing the most sensible path and taking it with no issue.

At times she seemed aloof and distant, a defence mechanism that she developed after much heartbreak and grief. During her darkest times, Jolanta could even give the impression of being merciless and detached, focusing solely on her job and without leaving much room for friendships, thinking this would protect her from pain altogether. Whenever she forced herself to put on that armour, she was methodical and, frankly, the prototype of that unfeeling witcher people loved to spread lies about.

More disastrous was her personal life, but she reserved an unwavering loyalty to each and every one of her lovers and companions, even though the one she truly, really, most profoundly loved was Putnam Pitch, who would eventually become her husband after much strife. Incidentally, her rocky relationship with Putnam would lead her to become disenchanted and colder, refusing to letting anyone in, or close enough that they would see into her heart, which had been broken a million times over.

She was maternal, firm and fair, as her children would assess later on, and her quips made her good company and a fine drinking buddy.

Equipment

Jolanta was known for primarily wearing enhanced School of the Cat gear for most of her life, which Pardus gave her after completing her training. She also had a pair of enhanced steel and silver Cat witcher swords that Pardus managed to salvage after the caravan's fall. Although she was capable of adapting to a variety of combat styles and equipment with little to no difficulty, as demonstrated in her duel against Putnam Pitch in 1288, Jolanta would only change her primary equipment on very few occasions. One such instance was when , as already mentioned, she came into possession of the silver sword of the founder of the Dyn Marv caravan, Gezras of Leyda, known as the

Rose of Shaerrawed

Rose of Shaerrawed, in early 1286 after it passed through the Borsody Auction House in Oxenfurt, when a third party recognized her and offered it to her on behalf of a mysterious man, whom Jolanta soon discovered to be Putnam. He had acquired the sword and left it in her name after assisting a Koviri noble while passing through Novigrad. The noble offered him anything from the Auction House as a reward, and Putnam chose the sword after recognizing it and thinking of Jolanta. Later on, she switched to the equipment of the School of the Crane and emulating her husband but in reverse, opting to keep the silver sword she already had instead of choosing one from the Cranes. This necessitated their blacksmith, Roth, to reforge the blade to suit the specialization of the school she co-founded with Putnam.

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Trivia

- The murders among the Valois are an indirect reference to the death of Duke Louis of Valois, in 1407, whose murderer is unknown.
- Many witchers at the School of the Cat even joked that she might be the "lost daughter" or "descendant" of Gezras of Leyda because of her physical resemblance.
- Klef is a reimagining of two characters that appear in both television adaptations of The Witcher. Klef from The Hexer, and Klef from Netflix's "adaptation" of The Witcher. In fact, the idea was to merge both characters into one. That is, a witcher from the School of the Wolf who was exiled to the School of the Cat (something that even fits with the books, as mentioned by Brehen) and who would later be killed by a demon during Joël's unorthodox training.
- The Blood Inn is a direct reference to a famous Spanish Inn that existed in the city of Toledo known as "Posada de la Sangre".
- Jacek is a reference / adaptation of the famous creepypastas character "Jeff : The Killer".
- The story of the koshchey of Cintra is a reference to Maria Morevna's Russian fairy tale, with the typical subversive twist of Sapowski's short stories.
- Jolanta's design is heavily inspired by Swedish actress Rebecca Ferguson.
- The Bloody Mary nickname is a reference to the urban legend of the same name.

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